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Number 79

February 1991

Shanghai II ● Stunt Driver ● Knights of the Sky

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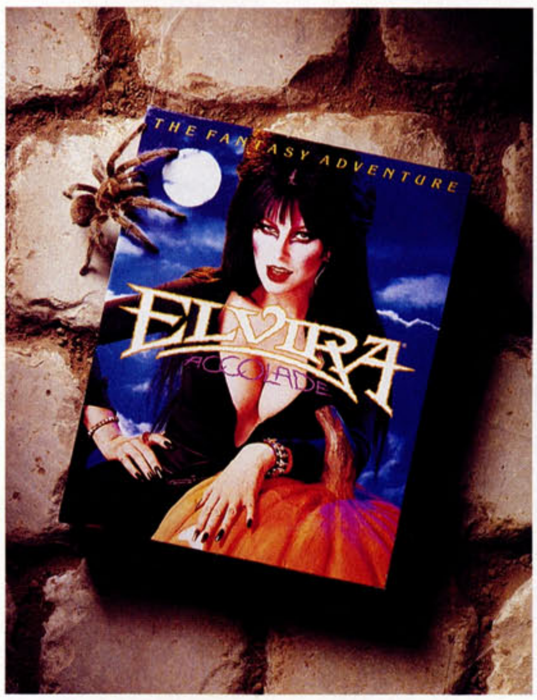


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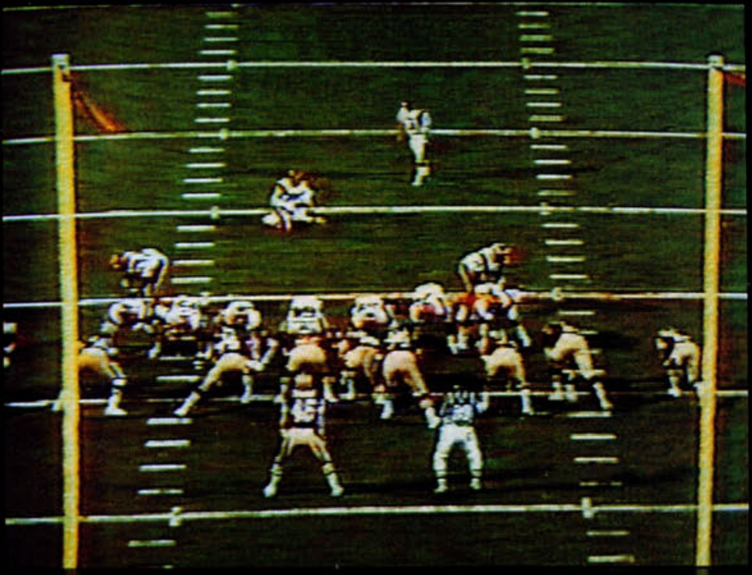
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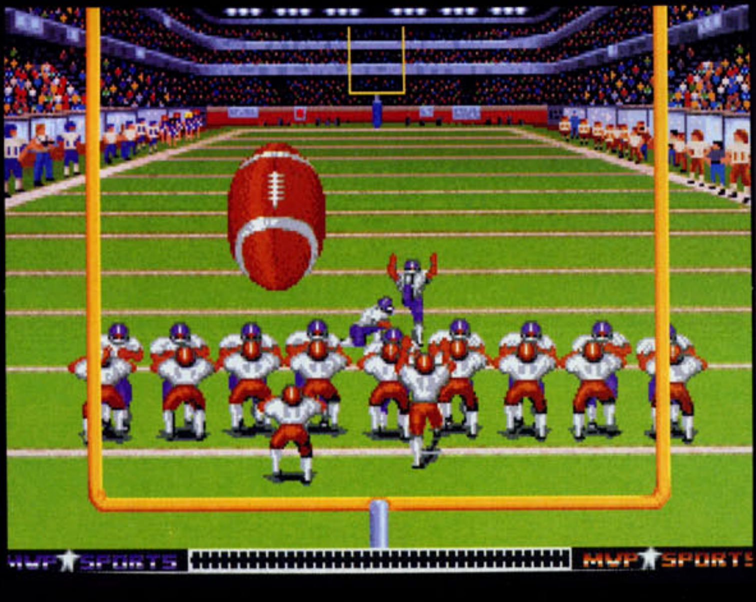
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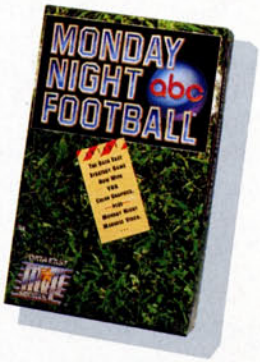
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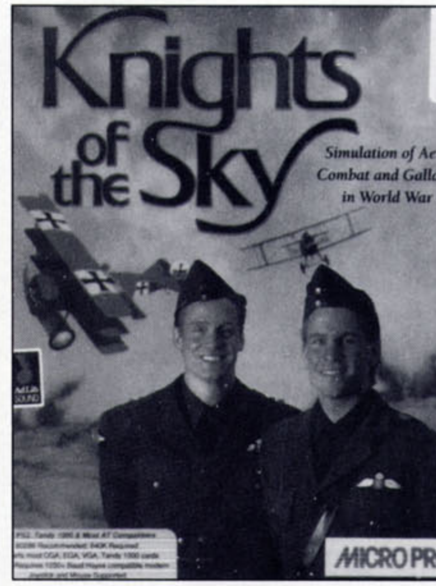
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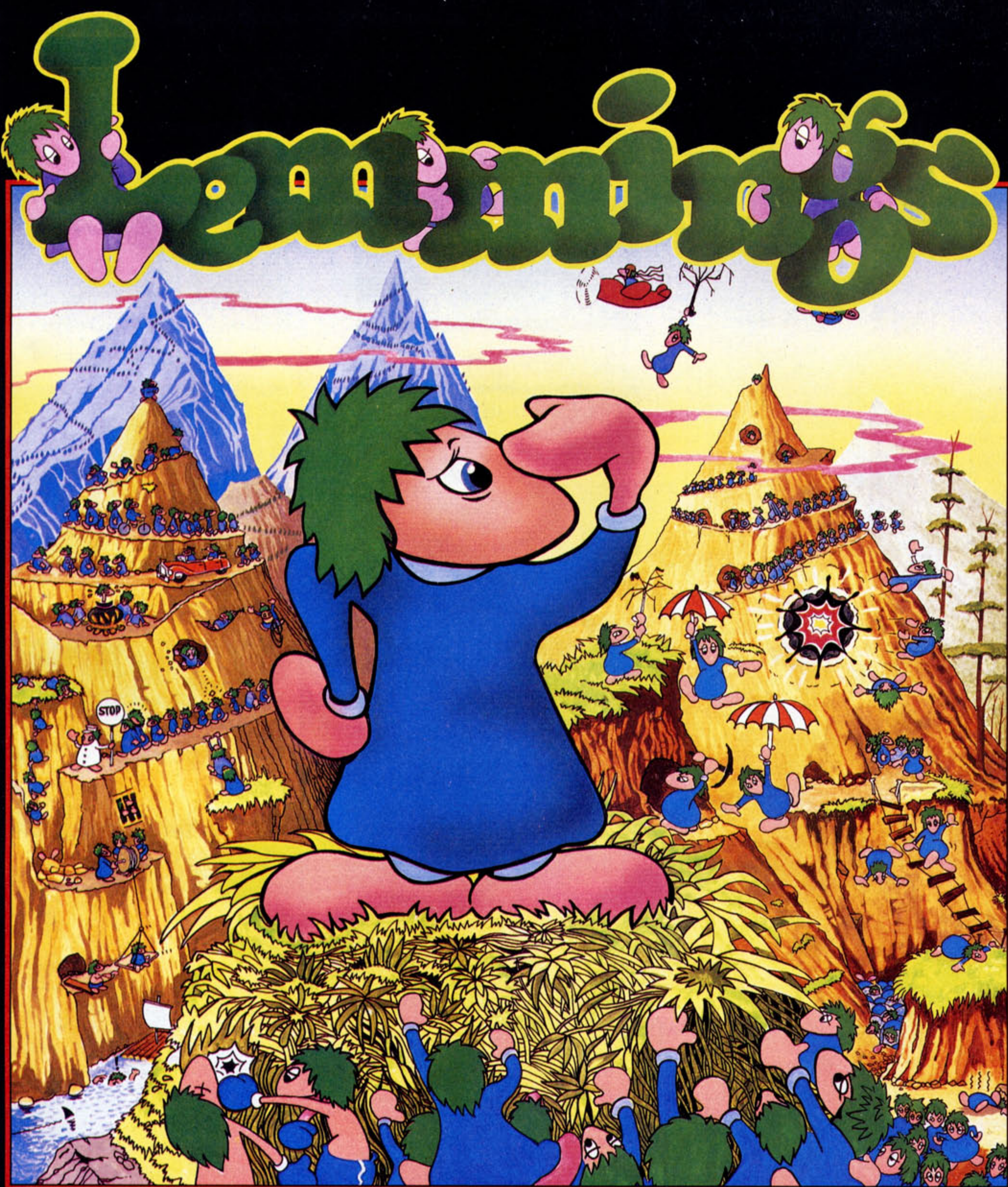
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Features

Departments



Save the Lemmings-
and

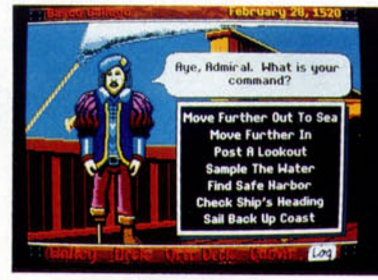
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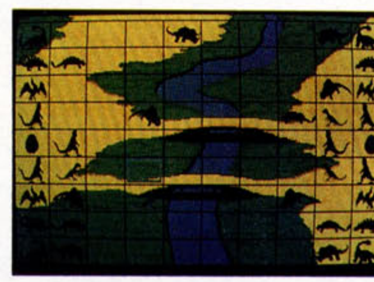
Dragon Lord



3 in Three



Full Metal Planet



Dino Wars

Accolade
San Jose, CA

ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK: Engage evil creatures in grisly hand-to-hand combat in this horror movie of an adventure, complete with spurting blood and disembodied heads. Elvira's entry into adventure gaming features spooky VGA-level graphics of dank, gloomy castle dungeons, as well as digitized animation of the bosomy, wisecracking Elvira herself. IBM, Amiga ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Broderbund
San Rafael, CA

GALLEONS OF GLORY: Step into Magellan's boots and play out the trials and glory of his famous expedition in this creation from the folks who gave you Carmen Sandiego. Discipline, rum rations, repairs, gunnery practice, course changes and more can be delegated to the crew via the simple mouse interface and each decision impacts the potential success of the expedition. Quick to learn, easy to play, yet hard to master, this game is entertaining as well as being hearteningly true to the history on which it is based. IBM ($44.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Cinemaware
Westlake Village, CA

3 IN THREE: This spirited, satirical adventure of a number 3 that has been ejected from its spread sheet by a power surge and is lost in the alien world of letters is filled with brain-tingling puzzles and a maze of logical dilemmas. With a level of challenge not for the faint of heart, this game, from puzzle master Cliff Johnson (*Fool's Errand*), takes the tedious corporate computer mindset, spins it in circles and uses clever humor to shake it loose into a sharp-edged puzzle game. Macintosh ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

DRAGON LORD: Players hatch and raise a dragon, the basic weapon in this game. Then they groom it and prepare it for combat. Magic potions and spells are used to help defeat enemies along the way in the search for the missing pieces of the Talisman crucial to winning this intermediate skill level strategic fantasy game. Amiga ($49.95). Circle Service #4.

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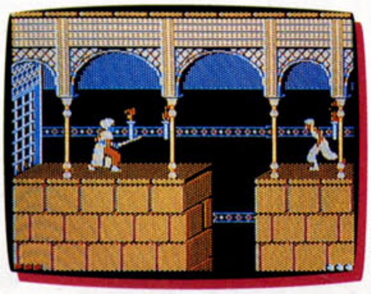
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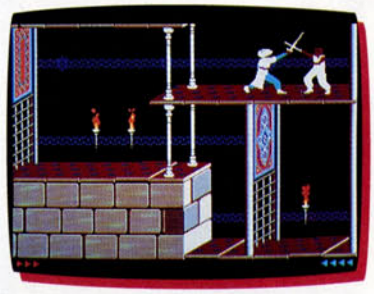
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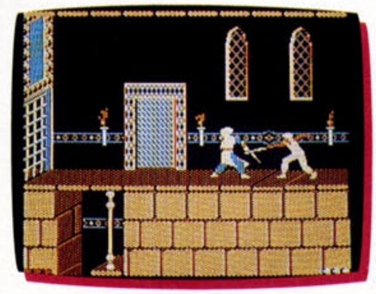
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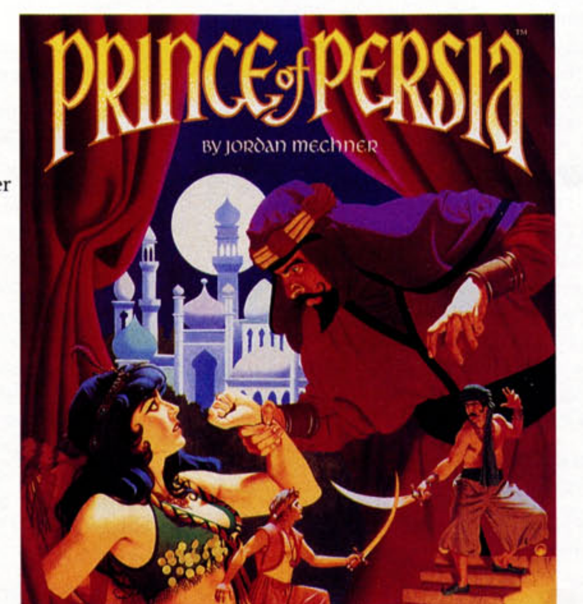
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82 PPF

Data East USA, Inc.
San Jose, CA

FULL METAL PLANET: The third offering in the "Draconian" series, this game is a test of strategy and diplomacy using the idea of industrial warfare in space. Players battle each other and/or the computer to obtain world-saving ore from the full metal planet. Designed for players of all skill levels, the game may be played by one to four strategy gamers. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #5.

DigiTek Software
Tampa, FL

DINO WARS: Reminiscent of Electronic Arts' *Archon* or Avalon Hill's *Beast Wars*, this arcade-style game features dinosaurs who meet as pieces on a chessboard, then battle it out one-on-one. The graphics in the action sequences are fairly impressive, but the play mechanics are frustrating and difficult in the action phase and inconsistent with the chess model in the strategy phase. Amiga ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Disney Computer Software, Inc.
Burbank, CA

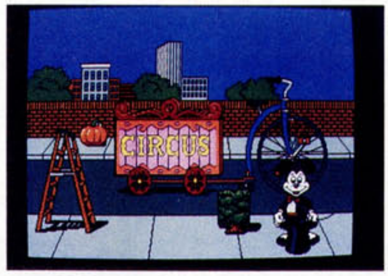
MICKEY'S COLORS & SHAPES: This software package for the preschool set (ages 2 to 5) offers attractive VGA graphics and high-quality sound (with Disney's Sound Source, which retails separately for $34.95). Unfortunately, Disney coasts primarily on the appeal of the famous mouse in this limited, overly repetitive game that amounts to little more than kiddie fluff in a marketplace that offers far more sophisticated fare for younger users. IBM, Amiga ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

GameTek
North Miami Beach, FL

HARLEM GLOBETROTTERS: Ever wanted to be a Harlem Globetrotter? Although there are better head-to-head computer basketball games, this game offers all of your favorite Globetrotter antics: bounce shots, kick shots, somersaults, piggybacks — they are all here. Circle Reader Service #8.

Interplay Productions
Santa Ana, CA

JAMES BOND — THE STEALTH AFFAIR: Essentially a sequel to *Future Wars* and using that graphic style and player interface, *James Bond* (a U.S. license *only*) sends the British supersleuth into his element in an attempt to find the missing Stealth Bomber (which, we hope, the Russians don't find, on radar or otherwise). IBM, Amiga ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #9.



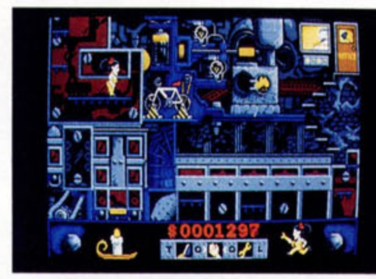
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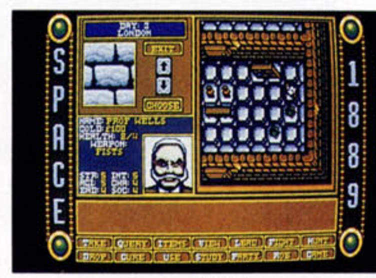
Harlem Globetrotters



James Bond — The Stealth Affair


Night Shift


The Savage Empire



Space 1889

Lucasfilm Games
San Rafael, CA

NIGHT SHIFT: Factory worker Fred or Fiona Fixit manufactures — what else — Lucasfilm toys (in either a display of industrial narcissism that rivals even Disney or a wonderful display of self-deprecating humor) in a factory with ever-increasing quotas where everything goes wrong, the boss yells and a lawyer even brings suit! This colorful fast-paced action game features more strategy than a *Mario Bros.* game, but may be too difficult to achieve the following garnered by the Nintendo mega-hit (or is that 4 Megahit?). IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Origin Systems, Inc.
Austin, TX

THE SAVAGE EMPIRE: Welcome to the world of Ultima. Here in the land that time forgot (dinosaurs, natives, all the usual stuff), the player must seek out the evil Dr. Johann (Warren) Spector and foil his foul plans. A huge adventure in grandest Origin/Ultima style full of fine graphics, sound and all the other "features" which their games are becoming known for. IBM ($69.95) Circle Reader Service #11.

Paragon Software
Hunt Valley, MD

SPACE 1889: Using a slightly improved *MegaTraveller 1* engine, this Game Designer's Workshop game has made a smoother translation into a computer medium. Plenty of interesting character development features highlight the huge storyline included in the box. The Victorian era never had it so good on an IBM. Circle Reader Service #12.

Psygnosis Ltd.
United Kingdom

AWESOME: In addition to the usual Psygnosis arcade "sound and graphics signifying action," this one is a bit different. Not only does it contain all the

(Continued on page 93)



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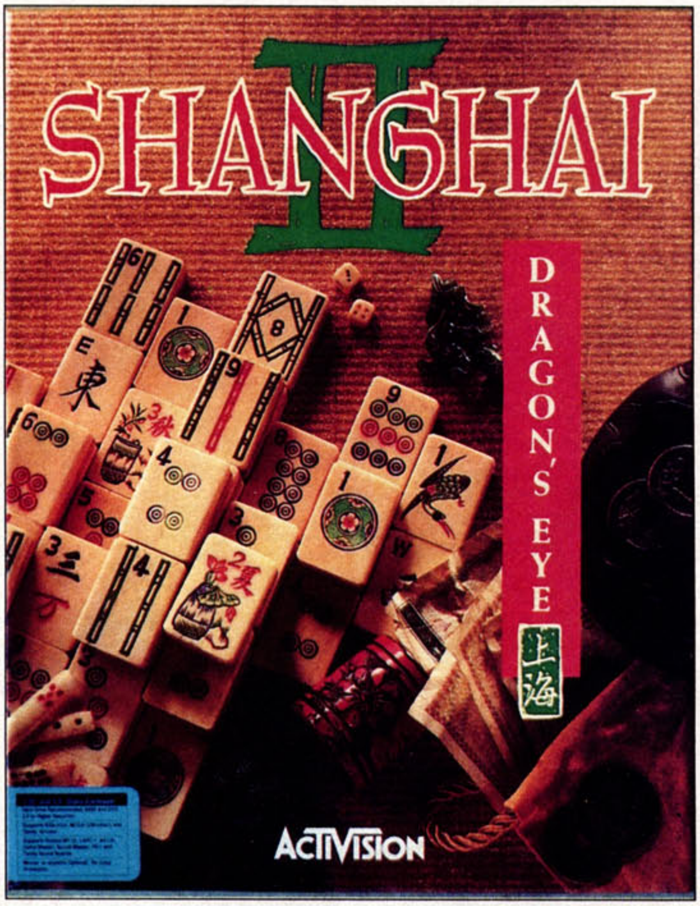
Activision's Shanghai II

by Alan Emrich

If there is a secret formula for success in creating an "ultimate" computer game for any given genre, **Activision** may have latched onto it. One can almost peer into the minds of the creative team which spawned *Shanghai II*. With the success in 30 different formats of their 1986 classic, *Shanghai* (with total sales of over 500,000 units), how could so successful a game ever be trumped?

This reviewer believes he has discovered the secret formula used by the creative team which created *Shanghai II*. There is no doubt that it all started with a meeting of the creative minds at Activision. Relax now and imagine them sitting around the conference table, brainstorming....

"Well, let's include some new tile sets. Like the ones on all the BBS networks." (They did. Beautiful VGA graphics present tile sets which are both artful and amusing. Different sets include playing cards; fantasy with all of the men, monsters and armor; sports; "wooden block" letters and numbers just right for youngsters; flags of the world; animals; and the stylistic Hanfuda design. Each of these different sets of tiles has its own unique qualities which do not always directly translate to the suits of crak, bam, and coin (plus winds, season, flowers and dragons) of the original Mah Jongg tile set. Fortunately, fully illustrated on-line tile set information is there to explain these nuances with but the click of the mouse, so as to assist players in determining matches. Unfortunately, there is no easy way for players to "create their own" tile sets, but that didn't stop all of the players of the original *Shanghai*, now, did it?)



TITLE:	Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Activision
DISTRIBUTOR:	Mediagenic Menlo Park, CA

"Wait, we can do better than just make more tile sets. Let's animate them, too!" (They did. Remove a pair of cats and the claw marks slash across the tile. Remove the One of Coins and it drops down a swirling well. The seasons change, the winds blow, fans open and close, fish splash about, the crowd cheers at football, and the dragons come to life. While not every tile is animated, enough are present to add true spice to the play of *Shanghai II*. The animations are mercifully short, dispersed enough to avoid becoming a nuisance and compelling enough to make onlookers stare on into the monitor well beyond their normal attention span. *Shanghai II*, like *Wing Commander*, has excellent "over the shoulder" draw to it.)

"And sound. Don't forget about sound support. Some nice music, some 'take away' tile sounds, you know...?" (It's got those, too. Unfortunately, we've heard complaints from others of, and ourselves experienced, a buzzing sound when playing on AdLib and Sound Blaster cards. Since sounds were one of the last things added to the game before its release, the rush work becomes apparent. Roland owners will be a trifle miffed to find out that only the *music* part of the sound support is available to them, while the *tile removal* sound effects can only be heard through their PC internal speaker. Still, if one can get past these glitches and programming limitations, there is some lovely music and clever tile removal sound effects. Admittedly, the music quickly becomes repetitive and might best be left set to play only at the end of the game, but a simple click of the mouse remedies all. Tile sound effects include angelic harps, dragon's roars, kitties meowing, bamboo clacking, winds blowing and more.)

"Right, but I'm tired of the same old tile layout. Let's do some new ones. The Chinese calendar would give us a spiffy theme. You know, the twelve animals, one for each year." (So now there are thirteen layouts. In addition to the original *Shanghai* "dragon" layout, there is one layout for each animal on the Chinese calendar. Interestingly, this includes another, different, dragon layout. Some of these are easier, and some are harder than the original layout, and all of them will take a bit of getting used to for veterans of the original *Shanghai* layout. Still, the core of *Shanghai II*'s success can be directly attributed to these multiple layouts, as they inject new diversity into the game, extending its replay value to unimaginable limits.)

"Okay, there are twelve new layouts, but everybody likes playing with blocks. How about a 'design kit' to make your own piles-o'-tiles?"

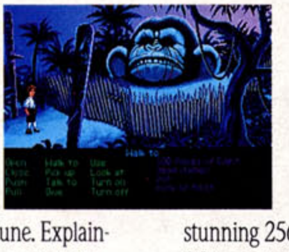
"Perfect." (Gee, everyone liked building with blocks as a kid, didn't they? Now with *Shanghai II*, players will find themselves playing with them all over again on their computer. This reviewer

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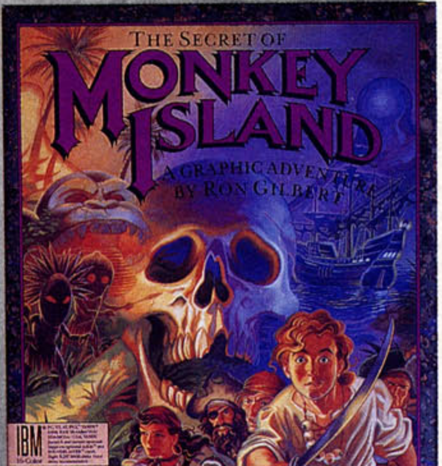
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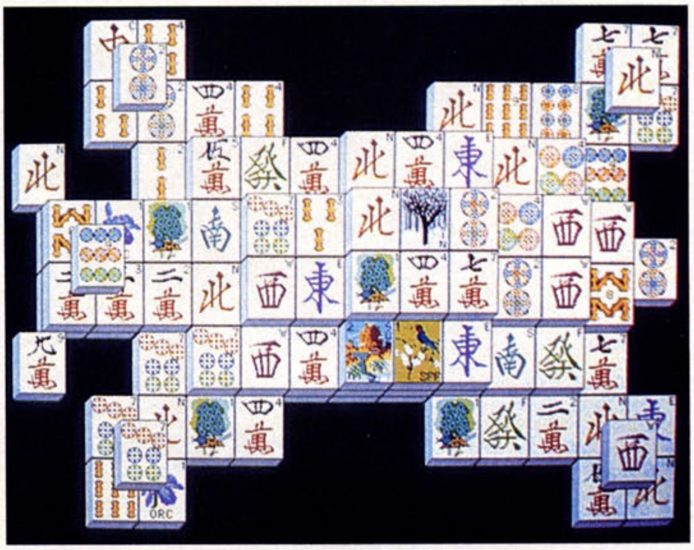
designed two new layouts in about an hour, one a castle with a courtyard, the other in the shape of his initials, A. E. Of course, the real fun is not only in creating layouts using the 144 blank computer "tiles," but also in tearing them apart through actual game play. Diversity piled upon diversity, enjoyment in designing layouts and enjoyment in tearing them apart. *Shanghai II* touches that responsive chord where complex minds can embrace simple "toys" like building blocks/tiles and lend wonderful credence to the expression, "men will be boys.")

"But we've got another entire game design to add. We've been calling it 'Dragon's Eye' and..."

"Is it like Shanghai?"

"Well, yes and no. One player tries to build a pile of tiles in the shape of a small dragon while the other tries to 'slay' it by removing matching tiles. Here, let me show you. I've got this Mah Jongg set right here...." (This new game was then developed and is what really puts the "II" in *Shanghai II*. After several playings, this reviewer still isn't sure he's got all of the subtleties to this interesting variation on *Shanghai*, but it is certainly easy enough to learn. The hard part, however, is to master *Dragon's Eye*. That will take even those who enjoy such "mind" games as *Mastermind* or *Host a Mystery* some time to figure out. Admittedly, it has been more fun than frustrating, trying to learn all of the ins and outs of *Dragon's Eye*, and it seems a bit easier for beginners to commence as the Dragon Master, rather then the Dragon Slayer.)

"Oh, great! Can't you see it now? A super-tournament game



where players try to beat all the puzzles in the least amount of time. We can even add a 'Hall of Fame...' to give them something to shoot for." (Sure enough, they did that, too. Tournament games are now "campaign games" consisting of defeating each of the twelve new puzzles. In addition to these, between every three games comes an interlude playing *Dragon's Eye*. Thus, there are *sixteen* games to complete to finish the tournament. To assist players who cannot finish a puzzle, the "Find a Match" and "Shuffle Remaining Tiles" help keys can be used, albeit with a time penalty (a very *large* one, in the case of reshuffling tiles). Like running a marathon, most players will be more rewarded by actually *finishing* a tournament, rather than setting their goal on winning it by setting the lowest time in the Hall of Fame. Still, the immediate goal of finishing even a single puzzle reminds one of a Chinese dinner. Both end with a fortune cookie, and it's not long before you're hungry for more.)

"You know, all this sounds great, and I think we can do it. But the reference card is gonna be a nightmare." (That's the truth! At six "pages" long, it's more like a complete rules summary than a quick reference card, and to make it worse, it's all in small text devoid of useful illustrations. By contrast, the on-line support is superior to the reference card in most respects. The very length of this game aid almost entirely eliminates its usefulness, but players are fortunate in that *Shanghai II* isn't that complicated a game to begin with, so "muddling through" the first attempts at its many new features can be easily accomplished with little reference to the documentation required).

"Sounds like we've got our work cut out for us delivering the goods on this project. I wonder what marketing's angle will be?" (A ball bag? Yep! Along with the 3.5" and 5.25" disks, Activision has included a little bag. Inside the bag are a couple of good-size marbles, one black and one white. Once players stop rolling them around in their hands like Captain Queeg from *The Caine Mutiny*, they usually read the little card included in the bag mentioning that these are "the eyes of the dragon." What will those marketing types think of next?)

"Who cares? Hey, guys, ever have an idea so good you couldn't wait to play it...?" (Ideas like that happen to gamers all the time. This time, the gamers are fortunate that the work is done and now they can relax enjoy playing *Shanghai II* either solitaire or with a friend. Even with some flaws in execution, the concepts in scope and grandeur that sired *Shanghai II* are those worthy of the highest praise. Well done, Activision. Well done.) **CGW**

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Fifth Eskadra	$36
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Gettysburg:Turning Pnt	$39
Golan Front	$36
Grand Fleet	$36
Grey Seas, Grey Skies	$36

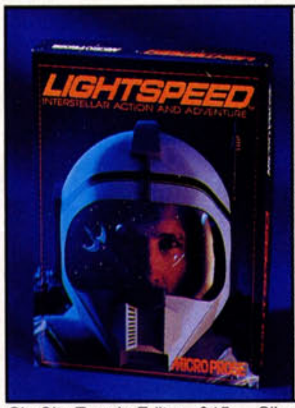


'ELVIRA MISTRESS OF THE DARK' from **ACCOLADE** gives you the look and feel of a graphic adventure with the depth of a fantasy roleplaying game. An enormous 800 room castle, with over 300 objects, combat and interaction with more than 100 characters make for over 100 hours of gameplay. Sound board support, 256 color VGA graphics and digitized voices bring the game to life.

Guns & Glory	$34
Halls of Montezuma	$12
Harpoon	$39
Harpoon Set 2, 3 or 4	$22
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High Seas	$33
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Kampfgruppe	$39
Kriegsmarine	$36
Kursk Campaign	$36
Long Lance	$36
Main Bttle Tank C Grm	$36
Main Bttle Tank N Grm	$36
Malta Storm	$36
Marianas Turkey Shoot	$28
Midway	$28
Moscow Campaign	$36
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North & South	$28
Northern Fleet	$36
Operation Overlord	$36
Panzer Battles	$28
Patton v Rommel	$16
Prelude to Jutland	$28
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Return to Falklands	$28
Rommel at El Alamein	$36
Rommel at Gazala	$36
Rommel North Africa	$28
Second Front	$39
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Sons of Liberty	$12
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Stalingrad Campaign	$36
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To The Rhine	$36
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Warship	$12
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IBM STRATEGY

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Ancient Art War at Sea	$31
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Breach II Scenario Disk	$15
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Genghis Khan	$39
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Lost Patrol	$34
Midwinter	$28
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Nobunaga's Ambition II	$39
Nuclear War	$34
Ogre	$19
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Orbiter	$30
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Paladin Scenario Disk	$16
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Populous Promise Land	$14
Project Moonbase	$34
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Reach for the Stars III	$12
Revolution 76	$33
Romance 3 Kingdoms	$45
Rules of Engagement	$34
Search for the Titanic	$25
SimCity	$33
SimCity Graphics 1or 2	$25



'LIGHTSPEED' from **MICROPROSE** is a scifi role playing space combat simulation. Space combat with full 3D VGA graphics. Multiple star clusters with dozens of solar systems, scores of planets and 25 alien species offer a wide range of options. You will need fast reflexes, an agile mind, and political skill during your search for a new planet where humanity can settle and thrive.

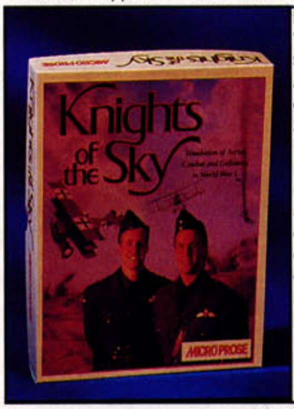
SimCity Terrain Editor	$15
Star Control	$29
Starfleet I	$34
Starfleet II	$41
Stellar Crusade	$12
Sword of Aragon	$28
Worlds at War	$30

IBM SIMULATION

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A10 Tank Killer	$33
ATP	$39
Abrams Battle Tank	$19
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Battle Command	$34
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F16 Combat Pilot	$34
F19 Stealth Fighter	$39
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Falcon	$34
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Fighter Bomber	$41
Flight Simulator 4.0	$39
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Infiltrator II	$28
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MegaFortress	$39
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Scenery Disk Japan	$22
Scenery Disk San Fran	$22
Scenery Disk W Europe	$22
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Silent Service I	$15
Silent Service II	$34
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Stormovik	$34
Strike Aces	$32
Stunt Driver	$32
Tank	$34

IBM SIMULATION

Test Drive II	$30
CA or Euro Challenge	$15
Muscle or Super Cars	$15
Test Drive III	$34
Their Finest Hour	$39
Thud Ridge	$31
Thunder Chopper	$28



MICROPROSE's 'KNIGHTS OF THE SKY' is a simulation of aerial combat and gallantry in WW I. Fly 20 different planes. Navigate with actual mapping of trenches, roads, cities, and aerodromes. Hundreds of missions in 7 categories including ground support and bombing. 13 3D perspectives. Head to head modem play. Sound board support and 256 color graphics.

Tracon II	$45
UFO	$33
Up Periscope	$28
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Wings	$34
Wolfpack	$34
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APBA Wizard	$31
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APBA 1989 - 90 Ea	$19
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ML Roster Security	$20

IBM SPORTS

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MSFL Pro Draft	$28
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NFL 1988 - 1990 Ea	$22
NFL All Star Teams	$22
NFL College Alumni	$22
NFL Dream Teams	$20
NFL Greatest Teams	$22
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Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	$39
Nckls Course 1, 2, or 3	$15
Omni Basketball	$34
Omni Horse Racing	$34
PGA Tour Golf	$34



'STAR CONTROL' by **ACCOLADE** is a space strategy game with real time ship to ship combat. Build ships, mines, and colonies. Deploy your fleet and explore the stars. Pilot 14 unique ships in head to head tactical combat. Multiple Scenarios, a construction set, and three skill levels give good replay value. Sound board support and 256 color graphics make this state of the art space combat.

Pro Tennis Tour	$28
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Serve & Volley	$28
Ski or Die	$28
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Superstar Ice Hockey	$28
Superstar Soccer	$22
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TKO	$28
TV Sports Basketball	$34
TV Sports Football	$34
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Weaver Commissioner	$16
Weaver 1988 - 1990 Ea	$16

IBM HARDWARE

Ad Lib Sound Card	$99
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Mach 1 + Joystick	$29
Mach 3 Joystick	$39
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IBM AD & D

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Curse of Azure Bonds	$32
Dragon Strike	$32
Dragons of Flame	$19
Heroes of the Lance	$28
Hillsfar	$32
Pool of Radiance	$32
Secret of Silver Blades	$32
War of the Lance	$32

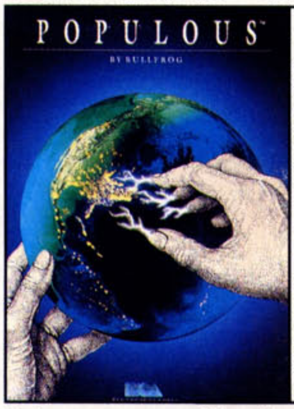
IBM ROLE PLAYING

2400 AD	$28
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Autoduel	$28
Bad Blood	$31
Bard's Tale I	$16
Bard's Tale II	$19
Bard's Tale III	$32
Battletech I	$34
Battletech II	$34
Buck Rogers	$34
Drakkhen	$39
Dragon Lord	$34
Dragon Wars	$34
Escape from Hell	$34
Federation	$34
Fountain of Dreams	$34
Fire King	$28
Hard Nova	$34
Hero's Quest	$37
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King's Bounty	$28
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Might & Magic II	$33
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Phantasie III	$12
Pirates	$19
Prophecy I	$19
Questron II	$12
Sentinal Worlds	$18
Space 1889	$31
Spirit of Excaliber	$34
Star Command	$12
Star Saga I or II	$34
Starflight I	$19
Starflight II	$34
Sword of the Samurai	$19
Tangled Tales	$21
Times of Lore	$28
Tunnels & Trolls	$34
Ultima Savage Empire	$39
Ultima Trilogy	$39
Ultima IV or V	$39
Ultima VI	$42
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Wizardry IV	$19
Wizardry V	$34
Xenomorph	$34

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Solitaire Royale	$24
Spot	$28
Stratego	$31
Trivial Pursuit	$28
Trump Castle	$25
Vegas Casino I or II	$10
Wheel of Fortune Gold	$15



'POPULOUS' from ELECTRONIC ARTS puts you on an equal footing with the gods. Bring disasters down on the heads of the infidels. Tell your followers when to build their ranks peacefully or when to make holy war. Bring swamps, floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions to the followers of the opposing god. Bide your time and when you are strong enough unleash Armaggedon.

HINT BOOKS

688 Attack Sub	$10
Bard's Tale I, II, or III	$10
Buck Rogers	$10
Champions of Krynn	$10
Curse of Azure Bonds	$10
Dragon Wars	$10
Drakkhen	$10
Fool's Errand	$10
Indy Jones Lst Crsade	$10
Maniac Mansion	$10
Might & Magic I	$10
Might & Magic II	$10
Neuromancer	$10
Pool of Radiance	$10
Puzzle Gallery I	$10
Quest for Clues 1,2 or3	$19
Secret of Silver Blades	$10
Sentinal Worlds	$10
SIERRA HINT BOOKS	$ 9
Starflight I	$10
Starflight II	$10
Ultima IV, V, or VI	$10
Wasteland	$10
Zak McKracken	$10

IBM ACTION / ARCADE

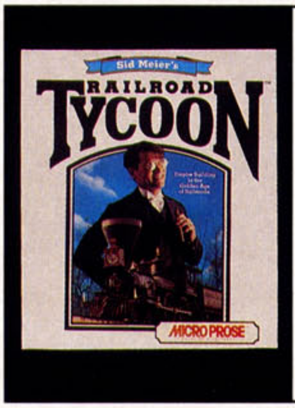
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Batman	$28
Batman THe Movie	$39
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Blockout	$28
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Bruce Lee Lives	$28
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F40 Pursuit	$31
Fire Power	$24
Gauntlet II	$34
Ghostbusters II	$28
Grave Yardage	$25
Harmony	$31
Indy Jones Lst Crsade	$19
Loopz	$28
Low Blow	$28
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Nevermind	$25
Night Hunter	$25
Night Shift	$28
Obliterator	$21
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Punisher	$25
Qix	$25
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Tetris	$24
Terrorpods	$28
Welltris Tetris II	$24
X Men I or II	$25
Zany Golf	$16
Zoom	$22



In **'BARD'S TALE III: THIEF OF FATE' from ELECTRONIC ARTS** something has sealed Skara Brae with an unspeakable evil. You must break this evil spell. Over 100 spells, 7 kinds of spellcasters, 500 monsters 84 dungeon levels and 7 dimensions make this the largest bard's tale ever. Auto mapping enhanced save game, and faster game play are big improvments on previous versions.

IBM ADVENTURE

Altered Destiny	$39
Arthur Quest Excaliber	$28
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Blood Relatives	$34
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Circuit's Edge	$28
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Countdown	$39
Covert Action	$39
Crime Wave	$39
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Die Hard	$28
Don't Go Alone	$28
Earthrise	$34
Elvira	$34
Fool's Errand	$34
Future Wars	$28
Gold Rush	$28
Heart of China	$39
Hobbit	$25
Hostage	$28
Hound of Shadow	$28
Indy Jones Lst Crsade	$24
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King's Quest V	$39
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Leisure Suit Larry 2 or 3	$37
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Maniac Mansion	$16
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Murder Club	$28
Neuromancer	$31
Night Hunter	$25
Oregon Trail	$28
Planet of Lust	$28
Police Quest I or II	$32
Questmaster	$28
Rise of the Dragon	$39
Rocket Ranger	$34
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Search for the King	$38
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Seven Spirits of Ra	$17
Sex Vixens from Space	$28
Shadowgate	$31
Shadows of Mordor	$28
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Sinbad	$15
Space Quest I or II	$32
Space Quest III	$37
Space Quest IV	$39
Spellcasting 101	$34
Startrek III or IV	$28
Startrek V	$33
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Street Rod	$28
Third Courier	$34
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Uninvited	$28
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War in Middle Earth	$34
Where Europe Carmen?	$30
Where USA Carmen?	$30
Where World Carmen?	$27
Where Time Carmen?	$30
William Tell	$28
Wonderland	$39
Zak McKracken	$16
Zork Zero	$38



SID MEIER's 'RAILROAD TYCOON' from MICROPROSE is a game of empire building in the golden age of railroads. You lay track, schedule trains, operate signals, manipulate stock, engage in rate wars, and build industry all in an effort to outwit, outsmart, out scoundrel the rail barrons of history. It is not easy. This is CGW game of the year and one of the best games of all time.

AMIGA ADVENTURE

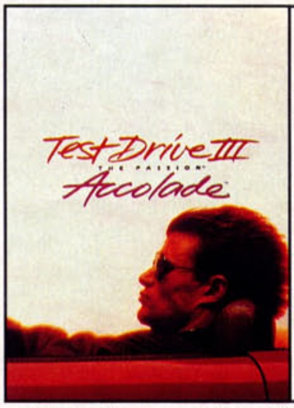
Arthur Quest Excaliber	$34
BAT	$34
Blood Relatives	$34
Chronoquest I or II	$34
Code Name:Iceman	$38
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Conquests of Camelot	$38
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It Came from Desert II	$18
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Loom	$41
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Neuromancer	$31
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Space Quest I or II	$34
Space Quest III	$37
Star Trek V	$34
War in Middle Earth	$34
Where Europe Carmen?	$34
Where USA Carmen?	$34
Where World Carmen?	$31

AMIGA SIMULATION

688 Attack Sub	$34
A10 Tank Killer	$33
Battle Command	$34
Blue Max:Aces WW I	$34
Cycles Grand Prix	$34
Days of Thunder	$34
Dragon Strike	$34
F16 Combat Pilot	$34
F19 Stealth Fighter	$39
F29 Retaliator	$34
FA18 Interceptor	$18
Falcon	$34
Falcon Mission Disk	$18
Gunship	$34
Heatwave	$28
Hunt for Red October	$22
M1 Tank Platoon	$39
Silent Service I	$15
Test Drive II	$30
CA or Euro Challenge	$15
Muscle or Super Cars	$15
Red Storm Rising	$30
Their Finest Hour	$39
Wings	$34
Yeager's AFT 2.0	$28

AMIGA ROLE PLAYING

Autoduel	$28
Bard's Tale I	$18
Bard's Tale II	$42
Battletech	$34
Bloodwych	$34
Buck Rogers	$34
Champions of Krynn	$34
Curse of Azure Bonds	$34
Dragon Lord	$34
Drakkhen	$39
Dungeon Master	$28
Federation	$34
Fool's Errand	$34
Hound of Shadow	$28
Immortal	$34
Lords of Rising Sun	$30
Might & Magic II	$41
Pirates	$31
Pool of Radiance	$34
Space Rogue	$34
Spirit of Excalibur	$34
Starflight I	$34
Tusker	$34
Ultima IV	$41
Universe III	$34
Xenomorph	$34



'TEST DRIVE III' from ACCOLADE is out and ready to blow the doors off any driving simulation on the market. The best roads: long tunnels, highways & side roads, mountain curves & ocean straight aways. Unmatched realism: snow, rain, night driving, headlights & wipers, instant replay and 360 chase car views. Exploration: backtracking, cross country, mulitple routes & secret tracks.

AMIGA ACTION / ARCADE

Aquanaut	$28
Batman	$34
Battlehawks 1942	$34
Budokan	$28
Day of the Viper	$33
Dragon's Lair I or II	$41
Dragons of Flame	$28
Harmony	$34
Heroes of the Lance	$28
Loopz	$34
Magic Fly	$28
Marble Madness	$18
Nevermind	$26
Pipe Dream	$28
Projectyle	$28
Puffy's Saga	$25
Shadow of the Beast	$29
Shadow of the Beast II	$39
Treasure Trap	$28
Tunnels Armageddon	$28

AMIGA STRATEGY

Breach II	$28
Breach II Scenario Disk	$15
DRAGON Force	$34
Empire	$33
Genghis Khan	$40
Imperium	$28
Lost Patrol	$34
Midwinter	$28
Nobunaga's Ambition	$41
Nuclear War	$34
Populous	$34
Powermonger	$34
Reach for the Stars	$29
Romance 3 Kingdoms	$45
SimCity	$33
Sword of Aragon	$28

AMIGA WARGAMES

Battle Tank Barbarosa	$39
Blitzkrieg 1MB	$38
Fire Brigade	$35
Gettysburg:Turn Point	$41
Halls of Montezuma	$28
Harpoon	$41
Kampfgruppe	$41
Kursk Campaign	$39
Main Battle Tank	$39
Malta Storm	$39
Moscow Campaign	$39
North & South	$31
Operation Overlord	$41
Overrun	$41
Red Lightning	$41
Rommel at Gazala	$41
Second Front	$34
Storm Across Europe	$41
To the Rhine	$41
UMS II	$41
Waterloo	$41
White Death	$41

AMIGA SPORTS

Gretsky Hockey	$36
Gretsky League	$28
Harball II	$28
Omni Basketball	$34
Omni Horse Racing	$34
TV Sports Basketball	$34
TV Sports Football	$34

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The Rumor Bag

by Frank Minnelli
(continued from CGW #78)

My bus twisted through the traffic grid of Manhattan in such a way that I perceived the street layout as rather byzantine in design. I was lost by the third turn. Of course, I remembered from looking at a map how regular the street grid really was, so I couldn't help but reflect how "reality" is in the eye of the beholder. Speaking of which, there are supposed to be almost a dozen little surprises in **SSI**'s upcoming *Eye of Beholder*. That's because the company is running a promotion called the "Beholder Bonus." There *may be* up to one bonus feature (sometimes called an "easter egg") per level. We passed by the flagship NBC studios and I couldn't help but play out a game show scenario in my head. "And now, Jay, tell us what the first 50 MS-DOS players and first 50 Amiga players who find the right number of bonus features will win."

"Well, Frank," the familiar voice would sound, "From **Strategic Simulations, Inc.**, leading publisher of computer wargames since 1980, and **TSR**, publishers of the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* role-playing games, comes *Beholder Bonus Bags* filled with a variety of prizes valued at over $100, suggested retail price." Apparently, players will receive an on-screen message stating, "Beholder Bonus — x points," whenever they discover a bonus feature.

The bus continued to pass by landmarks I had only seen in movies. Radio City Music Hall wore enough scars to reflect its age and its marquee didn't seem near as bright and glamorous as its on-screen persona. I guess even cultural landmarks need to have a facelift once in a while. In our industry, facelifts occur every so often. In fact, one of my sources waited until Alan Zimm, designer of *Action Stations* and active naval X.O., was chasing drug smugglers off the coast of South America before letting me know that he was working with some programmers on producing a graphic version of *Action Stations*. Facelift, indeed!



Times Square and the famous Newsday building loomed before me. I briefly imagined that some of my latest rumors could be posted on the electronic message board that continues to post headlines 24 hours a day. Just imagine: AUSTRALIAN PUBLISHER "STRATEGEM" TO RELEASE ORIENTAL FANTASY ADVENTURE! "SHINTO JOURNEY" DELVES INTO SPIRIT WORLD. I think everyone would pick up the latest edition of *Newsday* just to find out that this adventure, which requires the player to wander through the ancestral spirit world associated with Shintoism, will be released in July of 1991 in the U.S.

Then, again, what if they saw a reference to *Death Knights of Krynn* on the message board? COMPUTER GAME SEQUEL ANNOUNCED FOR MARCH RELEASE ... "CHAMPIONS OF KRYNN" SAGA CONTINUES! Not bad, huh? Massive gold letters for the latest gold box game. Seems appropriate.

My daydreaming (even though it was actually night) was interrupted by our arrival at my hotel. The doorman was dressed like an overgrown leprechaun and the lobby looked like something H. G. Wells would have visualized with its glass and brass elevators punctuated with neon. I mentioned the H. G. Wells idea to two suits (who looked more IBM corporate than GQ) who entered an elevator at the same time as I. "Wouldn' know, mate," said one of them in a cheery Aussie accent, "Oi'm more the H. Rider 'aggard type, m'self."

I stifled my desire to do my Paul Hogan imitation and listened with great interest as he told me about **Strategic Studies Group**'s *Warlords*, an eight-player fantasy-strategy game headed our way from down under. He said that realistic battle sequences, personal exploration and diplomatic maneuvering all form part of the game. It sounds both ambitious and fascinating.

We parted on the lobby floor (I guess they have to put the lobby on a higher floor in the Big Apple so that your baggage doesn't get stolen while you're waiting to check in.) and I managed to get checked in and ride the elevator up to a floor that seemingly gave me an eye-to-eye view with the Empire State Building. The red message light on my phone was flashing as I arrived and I quickly checked with the desk. One of the designers attending the conference had left me a message to meet him at Grand Central Station. He said it had something to do with Martin Campion and I would want to know. You're darn tootin' (pardon the pun) I'd want to know. Martin is the one who designed *Rails West* for **SSI** almost a decade ago. Since my publisher is both a railfan and currently working on *The Complete Strategy Guide to Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon* for **Compute! Books**, I figured he'd want to know what an old rail buff was up to and I might even get a promotion for finding this tidbit. I pulled on my overcoat and my head bag and charged out of my hotel room, hotfooting it past the bright lights and street vendors of Broadway to the subway station.

I wanted to catch the shuttle to Grand Central, but on the way, some street prophet saw enough lily-white complexion peeking out from under the bag that he pointed his long ebony finger at me and proclaimed me to be the "Anti-Christ." He said the Jesus was black and only minorities could be redeemed. Now, I don't have any problem with a dark-complected Jesus. After all, he was Hebrew, not Irish. Still, I wasn't real wild about being consigned to hell and damnation simply because I was passing by on a cool New York City night. He challenged his listeners to find their true heritage and I couldn't help but chuckle as I climbed down the subway stairs.

I knew something about their heritage. After all, I once volunteered for a teaching assignment in a Nigerian graduate school and I can, at least, say "Good Morning" in Yoruba. Besides, I was looking forward to playing **Strategem**'s *Lost In Africa*, an adventure set in the "Dark Continent" era. It looks like a sophisticated role-playing approach to the subject matter found in the boardgame, *Source of the Nile*. Fortunately, the computer game is expected to emphasize people and cultures over the exploration of "long rivers." That's good, because there are some fabulous cultures in Africa.

I entered the main room in Grand Central Station and immediately craned my neck into a gawking tourist position in order to see the painting of the constellations being restored on the ceiling. My source laughed at my awkward stance and maneuvered me into a little deli for some coffee and cheesecake. The latter was the pastry kind, although the attractive female designer I had gone to meet could have provided plenty of the other type, had she wished. "So," I blurted out, "what kind of railroad game has Martin developed?"

She looked at me with that "What bus did you just get off?" look and laughed. "It's not a railroad game, Frank. It's a medieval strategy game. Just like *Rails West* was economic strategy, *Medieval Lords* is going to combine economics and military strategy." I scribbled my notes down as fast as possible, while visions of that promotion receded into the realm of lost dreams. **CGW**



"I can't say how much it hit me to be sitting up there, a couple of miles high, looking down on the battlefield, in fact, on four or five battlefields, and sweeping them all in one glorious bird's-eye view."

World War I Pilot

Red Baron™

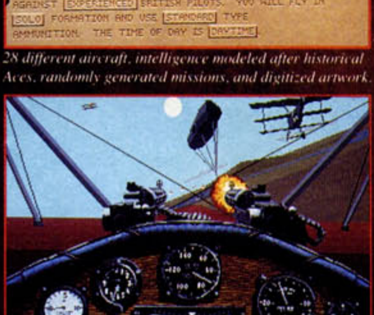
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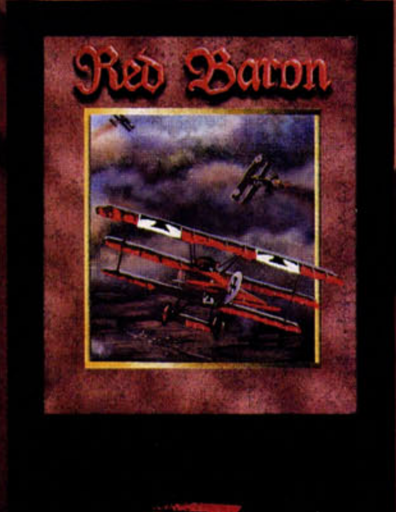
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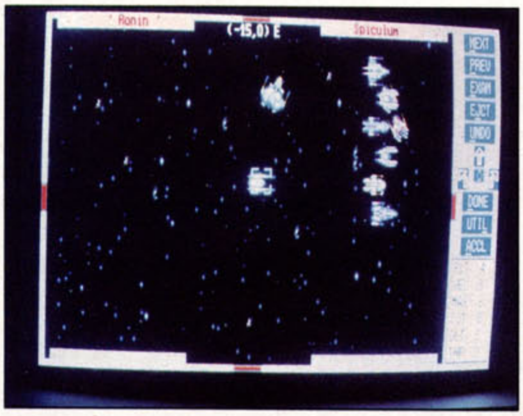
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Beyond the
and Into the

by Dave

The Good Guys/Bad Guys references is sort of an in-joke. Some players of Interceptor, *computer and paper versions, enjoy playing the Terran Overlord Government, and get very uppity when referred to as the Bad Guys since, obviously, the Renegades are "spineless, traitorous scum." The bad guys don't wear black, the good guys don't wear anything but black. It is left up to the player to decide who is on the side of right, and who is on the side of wrong. This author knows which side he flies for, though...*



Title:	Renegade Legion: Interceptor
Systems:	IBM
Price:	$59.95
Developer:	Todd Mitchell Porter
Publisher:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Sunnyvale, CA

Secret – Penalty for Unauthorized Use is Death (see TOG-R-7426). Enemy agents have captured our newest training device. In their hands it will spell the demise of numerous of TOG's finest pilots. You must intercept the renegade squadron before they can escape with the data and compromise TOG's entire pilot-training program. It is suspected that this vital data will be reproduced and distributed to all of TOG's enemies via primitive personal computers. If you fail to stop the rebels from escaping with this data, do not come back. End of transmission.

SSI's newest release in the realm of science fiction, *Interceptor*, is based on **FASA**'s board game of the same name, from the world of that company's *Renegade Legion* games and books.

Interceptor is a very detailed space fighter combat game, yet it is *not* a flight simulator, nor is it intended to be one. One can use the same fighters that are in FASA's boardgame or create custom designs. Players may also "roll up" original pilots, create new squadrons (at six pilots per squadron), and even run a campaign game.

There are two sides in this conflict: the TOG (Terran Overlord Government), which represents stability and organization in the Galaxy (albeit a corrupt and ossified one); and some "independent" sorts who consider the government to be the bad guys – the Renegade Legion and the Commonwealth. "Legalistic" sorts consider them to be bandits, scoundrels, and rebels.

The computer game plays very much like FASA'S *Interceptor* board game and has excellent EGA graphics. A player doesn't need to be familiar with the FASA boardgame to really get going, either.

Interceptor is a space fighter wargame with some elements of role-playing based on a pilot's varying abilities. As for graphics, one must remember that he is fighting in deep space, not Blackmoor Castle. The fighter icons are extremely detailed and colorful. Sometimes, however, when the fighters occupy the same sector, the icons can become confused. (It is surprising how soon one is able to identify the jumble anyway.) There are also character graphics for your squadron members, up to four different pictures for each of the five races, one for each sex, and different ones for each branch of service as well.

Players can challenge the computer AI or fight it out player-versus-player. In the latter instance, one player assumes the role of the Renegade Legion (the good guys?) squadron, while the other player plays the TOG (bad guys?) squadron. It is also possible to split either of the squadrons between two players while playing against the computer.

After playing *Interceptor* for approximately 30 hours, this reviewer is not even close to being bored yet. Even with no previous experience with the FASA boardgame, it was easy to start the game, learn to play it, and get plenty of enjoyment out of it in short order.

Each copy of *Interceptor* comes with two dozen card-stock fighter craft information cards (printed on both sides), one for each fighter in the game. The cards contain a lot of good information, such as tactical hints regarding each craft. The copy protection is also an integral part of these cards. The pictures of the interceptors on the cards have an artist's drawing and a reproduction of the appropriate computer graphic (uncolored).

Interceptor is a space fighter wargame inasmuch as the player controls a squadron of up to six fighters with movement by hexes, rather than point-to-point. Players can turn off the hexes and use "hexdots" or turn both of these options off and have a very nice starfield appear as a background in their place. Players begin by picking sides, Renegades or TOGs, then build squadrons and go on one of thirteen missions. The actual mission to be undertaken is determined at random by the computer. When a mission is called, a briefing sheet appears on-screen (complete with letterhead and so on). On this sheet is the information needed for the mission. There are campaign elements which include character advancement. The characters pilot the squadrons of fighters. *Interceptor* is more like a "battle simulator" than a role-playing game. Individual pilots are rated on measures of "Gunnery" and "Piloting." *Interceptor* features more than 14 types of missions, from dogfights to space station attacks. As the campaign progresses, the pilots improve and prestige points can be used to requisition better fighters.

Prestige points are gained by shooting down enemy craft, completing missions, and just for being on the winning side. A pilot will usually get 700-800 points on a mission in which he destroys an enemy interceptor. One pain is that credit for the kill goes to the last pilot who fired on an interceptor before it blows up. Although all fire is simultaneous, anyone hitting the "dead" interceptor after the killing blow gets no credit, and there are no shared kills. Pilots will also receive decorations (neat pictures) and written commendations at the completion of each mission. This too will result in the pilot receiving prestige points.

Mission Summary Sample: Mission #8. The TOGSQD is hereby ordered to provide fighter cover for covert transport operations around Caesar's Folly. You will bypass enemy fighters, draw-

Dark Night Starry Sky

Arneson

ing them away from the transports that will follow several minutes behind. Engage opposing fighters until you are ordered to break off the attack.

The war has created a thriving black market on Caesar's Folly, giving us numerous opportunities to place TOG intelligence agents among the smugglers who operate there. Protect the TOG's investment. Remain engaged with the enemy until ordered to leave. Your squadron will be rewarded for every ship that crosses the area of interdiction.

Dominant (TOG Medium Fighter)

Mass: 130
Right Engine: 800
Left Engine: 800
Thrust: 6
High-thrust modification (with 3/6 lasers removed)
Streamlining: No
Anti-Grav: Yes

Shields:		**Armor:**	
Bow:	50	Bow:	50
Right:	50	Right:	40
Left:	50	Left:	40
Stern:	60	Stern:	60

Weapons: / **Ranges**

Type	*Location*	*1*	*2-3*	*4-6*	*7-10*	*11-15*
3/6 Laser	Bow	8	7	6	0	0
3/6 Laser	Bow	8	7	6	0	0
7.5/4 Laser	R/Wing	8	7	6	5	4
7.5/4 Laser	L/Wing	8	7	6	5	4
EPC 9	Bow	9	5	3	0	0

Warning: No prestige will be gained if you leave the area before the transports have made it out of this sector.

You must exit from the side of the map opposite the side you came in on. Your ships must wait for orders (which will appear on the screen) before heading for the enemy's side of the map. If your nemies flee, they will run off the edge they set up on. Each surviving pilot will get 50 points for very enemy ship that disengages or is destroyed.

Taking out a Space Station, and defending the same, seem to be the toughest missions. The game appears to be biased in favor of the Renegades, especially in the form of the *Fluttering Petal*. In four sample engagements, the *Petal* had four kills to its credit and the Renegades still won all four rounds handily, even when there were similar numbers on both sides.

Designing the perfect fighter is a guess-as-guess-can proposition. The documentation goes into no detail about how to move around this screen, but it can be figured out with a bit of work. This reviewer recommends starting with the engines (as many as a hull will carry) and shields (again, all it can get, but opinions differ). Before designing ships, do a Save Game on the squadron. Next, take the new fighter on a mission and see how it works. In this way, a mistake can reloaded, and the squadron tried again. The game cannot be saved while in combat, and there is no practical limit to the number of saved squadrons.

This reviewer likes ships designed with turrets. Why? Because one can never count on being the first to move. With turrets, a player can always get in a few shots at an enemy on his tail.



Make sure that any bow guns are deadly at short ranges. When moving up on an enemy tail, stick the muzzles of the lasers into their afterburners and let go. Since there are usually some enemy ships that will move after, turrets can cover any exposed areas and add to the foes' worries.

This reviewer recommends L5/1s, EPC 9s, and NPC 9s. Throw in a big Laser 7.5/6 or MDC 10 for medium-range work. Avoid long-range guns or any of the missiles. Be aware of the maxima. If a craft is built too low, one could end up with a real pig. If well armed and armored this can be useful. For flexibility, keep them at least at a 5, 6 or 7. Play with it and have fun.

The figures for a neat little TOG medium fighter, the *Dominant*, can be found in the table below. While it shows definite KessRith influence with its heavy reliance on lasers, the *Dominant* is actually a Terran design. The original design called for two EPC 9s and very heavy shields. When it became apparent that the power drain was too much for the engines, the new configuration was adopted rather than upgrading the fighter from medium to heavy.

The *Dominant* lacks the speed of most medium fighters but makes up for it with weaponry which rivals most heavy fighters. The armor is weak but the above-average shields for this class ship helps make up for that. The *Dominant* was designed to fall close to the Spiculum's price.

The heavy lasers of the *Dominant* can cut deep holes in an opponent's armor while the EPC can enter these holes and undercut armor from deep within. The reliance on energy weapons rather than a missile-based offense has been questioned by many TOG strategists, but the designer feels that the energy weapons will extend the *Dominant*'s loiter time in combat.

Designing ships was really an enjoyable experience. Now if only players could edit the icons and the pilot pictures ... but, hey, it's the fighters that count in this game!

(Continued on page 92)

Infocom's *Battletech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge* Unleashes Its "Lethal Heritage"

by J. D. Lambright

TITLE:	Battletech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Barry Green & Tony Van
PUBLISHER:	Infocom
	Menlo Park, CA



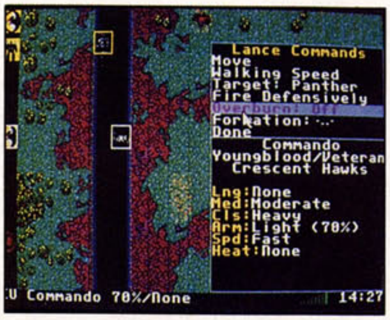
Set in **FASA**'s *BattleTech* universe (created for the boardgame and novels), the closest popular analogy to *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge* would probably be the recent film *RobotJox*. Although the movie was a dismal disappointment, it did show true 'mech battles as they might appear in a one-on-one situation and does give one an appreciation for the monstrous machines of destruction (heretofore seen primarily in Japanimation like *Fang of the Sun Dougram*) which are piloted by a warrior elite.

As noted in *CGW*'s sneak preview of the game (#76, p. 36), **Infocom**'s *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge* (*Revenge*) places the player in the role of Jason Youngblood. Jason is the son of a war hero who is pitted against House Kurita, an enemy combine who has captured his father, the best Phoenix Hawk pilot alive (as detailed in *Battletech: The Crescent Hawks' Inception*). The player, along with three friends specifically recruited for the job, attempts to get information from Morgan Kell, legendary leader of the Kell Hounds. Piloting a BattleMech ('mech), those gigantic robotic fighting machines from the 31st century, and in command of a "lance" of other 'mechs (four to a lance), his primary objective is to rescue his father.

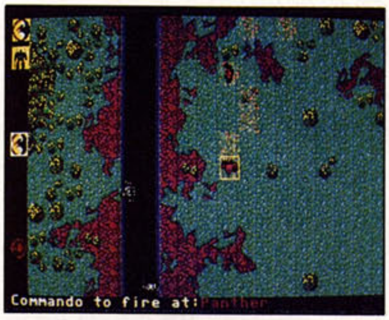
What's in a 'Mech?

Since *CGW*'s initial look at the game as a

work in progress, *Revenge* has reached its designed scope of more than 25 different scenarios (as opposed to the six which were mentioned in the sneak preview) and the design team has added more 'mechs than one could shake a Harpoon-6 SRM launcher at. Also, the function key controls which the authors of the preview cautioned players about have been made more effective now, so players do not have to chase a 'mech around with the cursor in order to gain control of it. With the addition of more weapons systems and better armor and armament as the player improves, it becomes a difficult choice in how to best recruit for one's lance. Players must study each 'mech carefully, trying to get low heat factors while maintaining high armor and armaments. One should be particularly careful not to choose a lance which consists purely of long-range fighters, for example, because there will inevitably be those times when one must stand toe-to-toe and slug it out at close quarters.



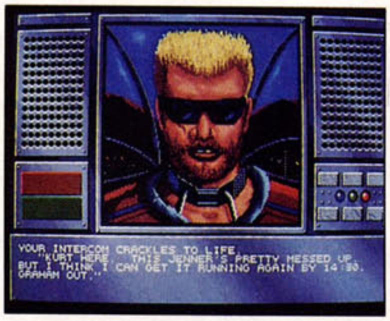
The jump jets were not operative in the version previewed by *CGW*, but they function beautifully in the actual game. Jump jets are of some importance when maneuvering through heavy forests and over low hills. These jets fire (almost looking like the entire 'mech is on fire!) and the player can fly over almost any obstacles. The tradeoff is that this adds tremendously to one's heat factor.



War is What You 'Mech It

As the first six scenarios were previously described in the sneak preview, this article will focus on the subsequent ones. *Revenge* is broken up into five sets of scenarios. The different worlds provided therein provide the basis for these scenario sets and each progressive set increases in complexity. The player starts off commanding a single lance and ends up commanding three lances (a total of twelve 'mechs) by game's end.

The second series of missions, designated Operation: Liberty, takes place on Dieron. In attempting to rescue the prisoners being held there, one of which might be Jason's father, the player is given the choice of two heavily armed or three lighter armed lances. As well, the player determines whether the lance will take the route through the mountains, the slowest route, or the forest road (faster, but more heavily defended). This reviewer successfully tried both ways and found the play balance to be excellent in each.



Hint: One should set all 'mechs, except for the APCs, at flank speed. Since the APCs are faster, they would outrun the other 'mechs and cannot hope to survive by themselves because of their lighter armor. Remember, if the APCs are destroyed, the scenario is over.

'Mech Donalds? Some Fast Food for Thought

Playing the game at speed one is to the player's advantage since he can make moves and change those moves many times each minute. The only time players are likely to want to use the fastest speed is when travelling long distances. Watch out, though, as one may encounter an enemy and have the battle resolved before being able to react it.

Though *Revenge* is not so much an exploration game, it might be to the player's advantage to send a 'mech north along the road after leaving the mountains (before turning south to go to the city). A reward awaits the player who finds the time to collect it!

Once inside the city, send the APCs south to Y56 along with Jason's 'mech, leaving the others to battle the city's defenses. Even if the trip north is made, one should have no trouble with the city defenses until reaching the prison. Concentrate fire on Y56 to knock down the prison walls, then load the prisoners in the APCs and "get the heck outta' there!"

After leaving the city, the player will be challenged directly by Chiun, the fiercest opposition warrior, but it is inadvisable to confront him, even if sufficient time is available. In fighting Chiun at this point in the game, the wear and tear on friendly 'mechs tends to cause the player to have to try the scenario over again. Since there is no save feature until *after* completing the scenario, this premature encounter with Chiun is best avoided. Instead, one should sprint through the mountains (the forest road will be strafed) and wait at the west exit until five minutes before the dropship is scheduled to arrive. At that point, get a move on and head out to the ship where the player will be rewarded with a new discovery.

'Mech Boot Camp (A Really Big Shoe)

The player will then be promoted and sent to the Arc-Royal training world, there to hone his skills for later battles. Since there was no training offered at the beginning of the game, this is the player's chance to learn some tactics, tactics that are vital to learn if one wishes to finish the game.

There are six scenarios to this series, three offensive and three defensive. One gets to choose from a smorgasbord of 'mechs with the latest in armor and weapons (begging the question "Where can I get my hands on these beauties?"). Study the objective of each practice mission and learn what it takes to win. Each scenario starts with a full complement of command, fire and recon lances, each at full armor with no damage (this is training, after all). Use all the tactics learned in previous encounters and be sure to experiment with new ones.

Find out how to use strafing to full advantage as it is more effective than the rolling barrage or firing shell coordinates. If the uplink is jammed, use the intelligence command to find out where the various lances are, then shell them to death! Be careful with the strafing command here, though, as it can also destroy one's own command. Remember, strafing is vertical and horizontal from the selected square, so make sure to avoid the line of fire. Check the jumpship often and change coordinates whenever the enemy is either destroyed or moves. Try to lead

the lance being attacked, and attack along roads (as they are often used by enemy 'mechs).

Tin Clans

After a while, the player is given command of the Crescent Hawks against a new enemy, the Clans. They are formidable opponents and threaten the very existence of the Inner Sphere (other than that, not much is known about them). The Houses of Steiner and Kurita have joined forces to defeat this new menace, so the player boards a dropship and sets off for Luthien to combat the Clans. Along the way, just when the dropship is charging its drive, a distress call comes in from the planet below. Kaesong, it seems, is under attack from the Clans. Those who have read Michael Stackpole's novels for **FASA** should instantly recognize elements of *Lethal Heritage*, a novel in the recent series.

Now the player must choose between obeying Morgan Kell's direct orders to proceed to Luthien or helping the beleaguered planet below (not to mention the chance to engage these new enemies). Assuming you decide to rescue the planet, you must choose the method of descent, either dropship or by jump jet. If by jump jet, it will not be possible to take all of the 'mechs; hence you can easily find yourself vastly outnumbered and outgunned.

Proper tactics include continuing use of strafing and concentrated fire. After the battle, a distress call from the nearby city will come in. They also are under attack. Naturally, at this moment, a call comes in from the ship that it is ready for immediate departure. What to do? Attacking the Clans at the city (hint) might lead to a reward, though Morgan will almost certainly chew the player out. Use the dropship uplink to strafe the city and the Clan 'mechs. Take the reward and then proceed to the final objective, Luthien.

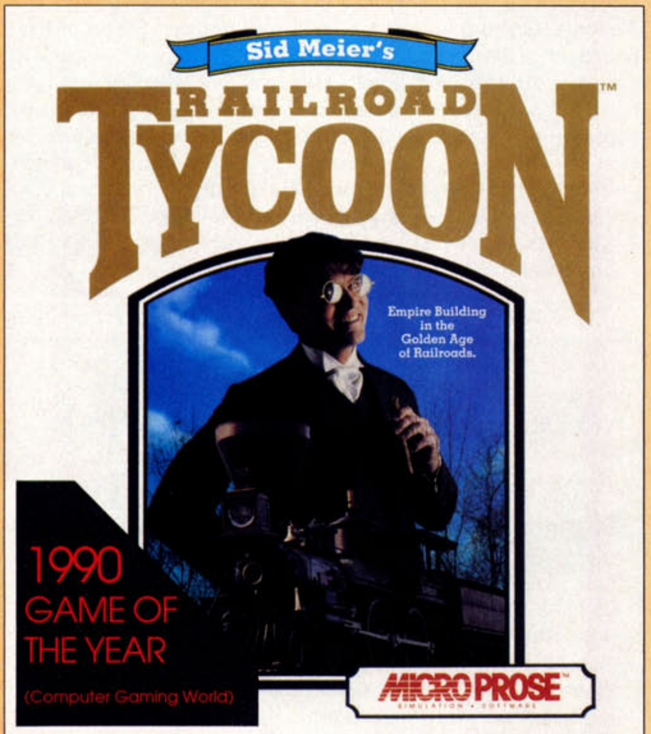
Mixed Nuts (and Bolts)

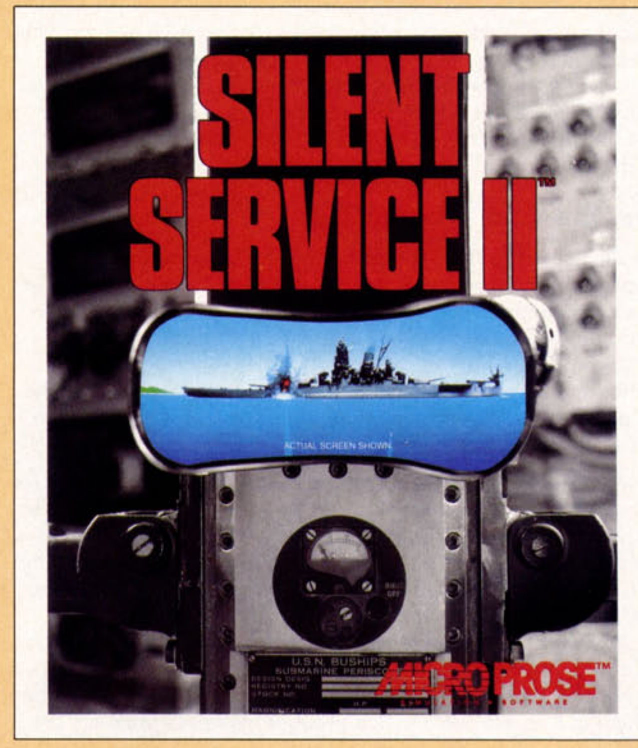
On Luthien awaits the biggest surprise (sorry, no hints about this one). In this, the longest scenario in the game, the player must protect a convoy (twenty minutes minimum). Playing at speed one (the fastest suggested playing speed for this scenario), it can take over an hour to complete.

Pull the recon lance back to the base and strafe the Elementals "with extreme prejudice." One-on-one fighting with these smaller Clan 'mechs will prove to be a *big* mistake (all 'mechs will be needed at 100% if they are to complete this series and win the game). Puma tanks appear later and must be destroyed before they reach one's command area, but be warned that they are tough opposition!

Once loaded, have the two lances head for the southwest quadrants and find some place to hide before the convoy exits from the map to the west. One must hide out for approximately eight minutes until reinforcements arrive (from the southwest) or engage the Puma 'mechs (another bad idea) until help arrives. When the help arrives, be certain to protect the newly arrived 'mech, since the pilot is the only one who can control the drop-

The Best of Times





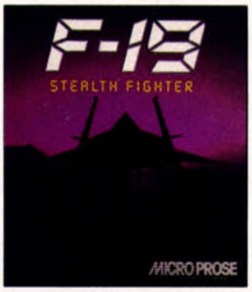


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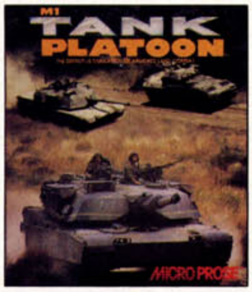


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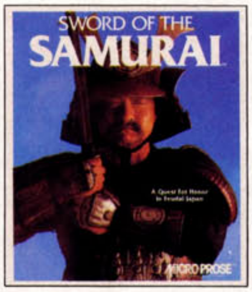
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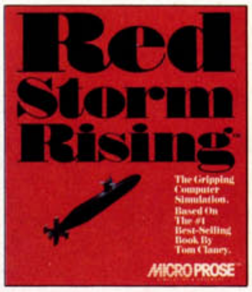


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ship for pickup. Next, proceed to the proper coordinates for pick-up, receive reinforcements, and, if possible, prevent the Clan 'mech from exiting the map to the northwest. If the newly arrived 'mech is killed, there will be severe penalties. If the new 'mech on the block lives, the player will rewarded with extra personnel and 'mechs.

Pass The Can Opener

The final scenario finds the player in command of both Kellhound and Kurita lances against the Clan forces. Choose the Kurita commander's son's lance and destroy all Clan 'mechs to prevent them from reaching their dropship. Try to capture the Clan Commander; if he escapes (or is killed) the scenario will have to be replayed. The player will be rewarded (as will all who played, dead or alive) and continue on to the *next* game in the series (if there is to be one).

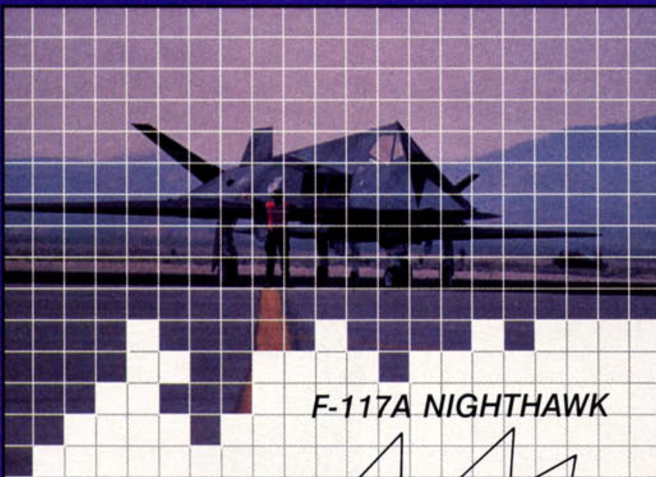
Many things that were a problem in the beta version (played for the sneak preview) have been corrected. The 'mechs still tend to change from "Fire-at-Will" to "Fire Defensively" and, when a target is destroyed, a new target is not selected, even if it is directly next to the victorious 'mech. These are minor in comparison to the effect that this game has on players. When combined with VGA, MCGA, EGA and Tandy graphics, plus the support of almost every sound card available, there isn't too much to complain about. The full effect of explosions and rocket fire from the speakers in this reviewer's office brought his family running in to watch the fun.

As the sneak preview noted, *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawks' Revenge* is more effective as a computerized version of the boardgame than as the adventure game many will expect when they see the **Infocom** label. This reviewer believes that being able to have satisfying battles without having to get out the tape measure and stacks of charts (required of the boardgame version of *BattleTech*) makes *Revenge* a very enjoyable playing experience. Therefore, he can wholeheartedly recommend the game. Indeed, Infocom has published the game every *BattleTech* devotee has been waiting for. Would anyone like to buy a set of *BattleTech* miniatures? **CGW**

Simple Tactics for Quick-Triggered Pilots

Players should use their specific weapons to maximum advantage (for example, don't use 'mechs at their ineffective ranges). It is also wise to concentrate the lance's fire at one enemy 'mech at a time and use "Fire-at-Will." This will push your 'mechs to their limit and can be the deciding factor in a battle. Use cover to maximum advantage, attack from behind, outflank the opponent, separate to attain better defensive odds and attack *en masse*. Finally, be certain to destroy an enemy 'mech completely (to avoid being caught by surprise the same way a disabled 'mech destroyed his opponent in *RobotJox*) and *never* underestimate your opponent.

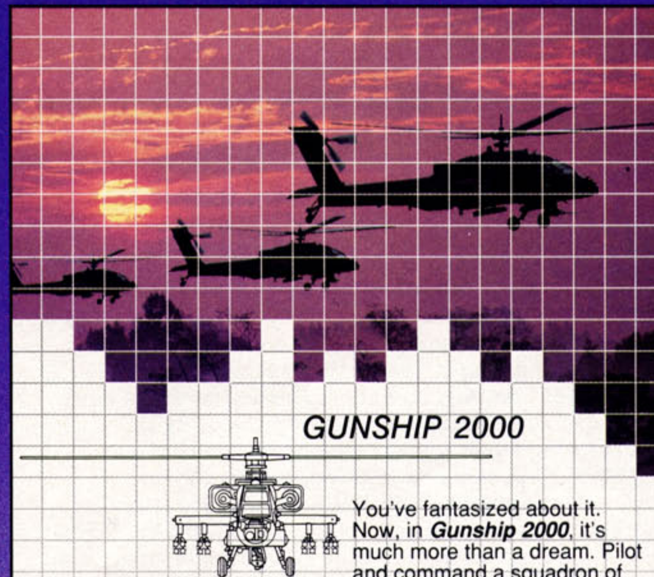
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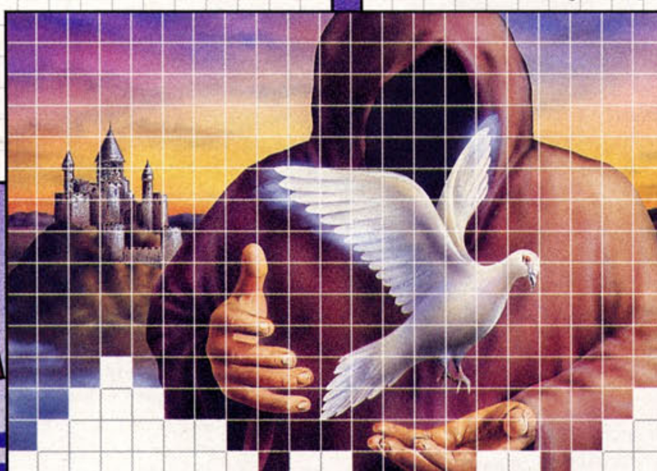




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Circle Reader Service #53

Digging *Tunnels & Trolls*

New World Recruits Crusaders of Khazan

by G. Marc Clupper

An innovative gaming system in its own right, *Tunnels and Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan* differs enough from other **New World** releases to more than offset the similarities between its documentation and packaging and those of, for instance, *Might and Magic*. The basic combat system for the game is derived from Ken St. Andre's classic *Tunnels & Trolls* pen-and-paper game, and the plot was developed by Liz Danforth's expansion of some of the original "solitaire dungeons." Since Ken's design was intended to simplify the mechanics of role-playing (he believed the *Dungeons and Dragons* system was too much work to be fun) and the "solitaire dungeons" were designed for roughly an evening of enjoyment, one would expect the design of *Tunnels & Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan* to emphasize short manageable quests and offer less complicated mechanics, rather than the lengthy quests and convoluted mechanics of many traditional CRPGS. While these expectations are met to a degree, those accustomed to the solitude of computer role-playing will need to exercise patience during their initial experiences in *T&T*.

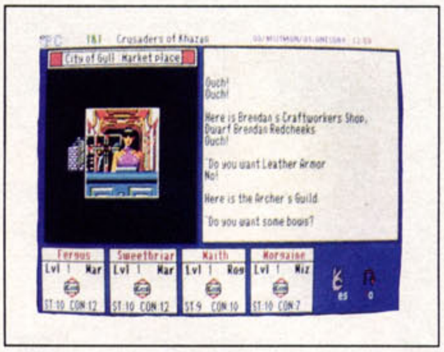
As the player's group of 1-4 adventurers sets out to explore the various parts of the game's continent, the true virtues of *T&T* (its rich text, story-line, and many sub-quests) come to light. The basis of the story is focused around the Dark Legions, monsters led by the Death Empress Lerotra'hh, and her minions, as they threaten the peace established by the wizard Khazan years before. So the major goal is finding the "good" wizard rather than the "bad" wizard.

Characters, generated in the customary RPG fashion, may be one of three trades — warrior, rogue, or wizard — and four races. A limited choice of portraits is available to portray each player character. Movement about the game's world is strikingly simple and quick via mouse. Indeed, the party's icon may wander so rapidly through the towns and beyond that the player may find his characters taking damage from plants, animals, and natural disasters before even realizing it.

Trolling For Adventure

T&T operates like a game master mediating a one-player version of *D&D*. The game's interactive nature is appealing, but its linearity and light attitude toward "complicated" adventuring and clever puzzles is a definite minus. Though the text is rich in detail, its quests may be completed quickly — perhaps, sometimes, *too* quickly. Players who wander from the intended track often find themselves herded back on course by a variety of antagonistic beasts and assorted phenomena.

T&T uses an unconventional interface/window display which requires more interpretation than the documentation provides. Although the three-dimensional "bird's-eye" view usually displayed during the adventure may seem somewhat reminiscent of the *Ultima* screens, it quickly becomes apparent while the player selects icons that the interface system is unique if not a bit tedious.



TITLE:	Tunnels & Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan
SYSTEM:	IBM (640K/Mouse recommended)
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Elizabeth Danforth
PUBLISHER:	New World Computing Van Nuys, CA

The Light and Dark Side of the Source

T&T's handling of the game's many languages (19 in all!) may be its most unique quality. As characters learn each new language, previously illegible writings and the unintelligible grumbling of creatures begin to make sense and, in turn, contribute valuable information toward the quests. Additionally, timekeeping is directly proportional to the manner of travel versus the scale of the map. Most CRPGs do not bother to give the player any perspective of scale. These and many other details (such as a unique calendar and week, complete with holidays) offer intriguing innovations over standard CRPG fare.

Unfortunately, many of the legitimate role-playing details advanced in the game seem to overwhelm the game play in the present version of the game. The design, as executed, leaves one singing, on occasion, an exasperated version of the rock song "I Think I'm Turning Japanese." **New World** went "offshore" in order to get the game programmed swiftly and efficiently. The game, as it stands, *can* be addictive and *can* open up new role-playing experiences, but it could have been so much more. Perhaps the Japanese program team retained more of the aspects of earlier CRPGs than the American designers intended.

Tips and Considerations

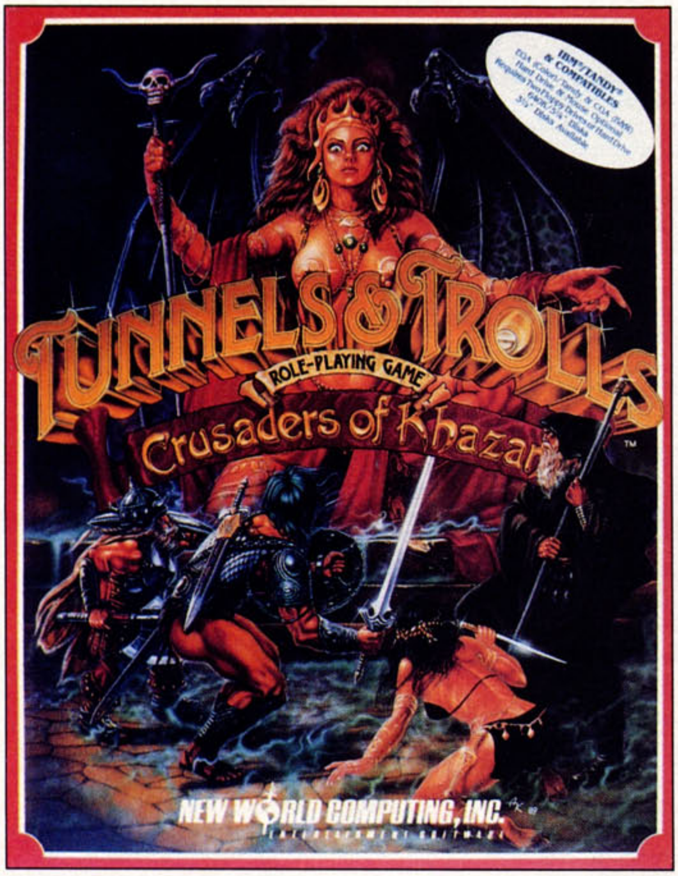
1) As characters travel from town to town, they will encounter various NPCs willing to join the party. There are enough that enterprising individuals will be able to take NPCs for what they are worth (i.e. "loot 'em and lose 'em"). *[Ed: "Enterprising," as an adjective, has often been a euphemism for "amoral" or even "immoral". But, hey, it's only a game, right?]* Just continue to gather the gold and recover any items worthy of resale. It is not a get-rich-quick scheme, but it will give new adventurers an edge in such hostile climates.

2) Many encounters may be avoided by running away as fast as one's legs can go. Which sometimes reveals the booty without causing the characters to get the "boot".

3) Before entering the Tomb of Khazan, the party should have the following items: the Crystal Skull, Heart of Fire, Demon's Eye, Horn of Ulhong, Khazan's Staff, and the Bag of Winds. **CGW**

Scorpion's View

Scorpia Searches for Treasure in Tunnels & Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan



Scorpia is an experienced and respected adventure game expert. CGW is pleased to be able to provide this forum for her distinctive and, often, controversial perspective.

After last issue's dismantling of *Fountain of Dreams*, I had hoped this issue would bring good news. Unfortunately, the crystal remains dark. The long-awaited *Tunnels & Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan* does not provide the bright spot expected on the CRPG scene.

To understand how a game with so much promise could possibly go wrong, a short history is in order. *T&T* came out originally as a pencil-and-paper system, designed by Ken St. Andre as a protest against the ever-growing complexity of *Dungeons and Dragons*™ (and later, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*™).

The game, along with the many book-sized solo adventures, became popular in Japan and, as a result, the Japanese requested a computer version. Liz Danforth, who had prior CRPG design experience (*Wasteland*, for instance), and had worked with Ken on revisions of the original T&T system, did the initial design for the computer game.

The material was then sent overseas. The Japanese translated the text, and did all of the programming. After its release in Japan, the game made its way back to New World Computing, where it was retranslated into English, and released in the US. During all this, there was no communication at all between the designers and the programmers.

The result is a mixture of bugs (see "Double Blind"), incorrect clues (see "Blind Rendition"), occasionally bizarre text, design errors, much frustration, and a few good ideas buried in the mire. *Tunnels and Trolls* is thus an almost perfect example of what happens when designers and programmers do not work together.

Plot is standard for the genre: get rid of the bad guys and bring back the good guys. In this case, the bad guys are Lerotra'hh (known informally as La Roach Trap) the Empress of Death, and her buddy, the evil wizard Khara Kang. The good guy is the wizard Khazan, who has disappeared and must be found and revived to put a final end to the nefarious schemes of the other two (sort of reminds you a little of *Ultima V*).

You begin by creating a party of one to four characters. Professions are the familiar fighter/mage/thief (here called Rogue), and races are Human, Elf, Dwarf, and Hobb (similar to a halfling). Anyone with experience in CRPG's can pretty well figure out which races are best suited for which professions, although such choices are not mandatory; it is possible to have, for instance, a Dwarf wizard as well as Dwarf fighter.

Stats for each character are rolled randomly. Take your time here and watch how the numbers go. The non-human races will come up with some fairly high scores in certain areas. For example, Durin, my Dwarf fighter, began the game with a strength of 36, whereas the human fighter started with only a 17.

While stats will increase during game play, it is vital to start out with the best you can manage. Particularly important are strength, constitution, dexterity, and speed. Never take a character with a speed in single digits; he or she will be very slow in combat.

It is possible to start with only one character, and pick up the rest by recruiting NPC's at taverns and guilds. Also, you could recruit to replace party members who die during the game. However, I was not impressed with the stats of these NPC's; they were not as good, overall, as the attributes of the characters I created. My advice is to go with your own people, and reboot if anyone dies.

Money is also randomly determined, and varies widely. Too widely, in fact: it could be as little as 40 for one character and over 100 for another. Since armor and weaponry are not cheap (at least not for the beginning group), you want as much gold as possible for equipping the party.

Gull of My Dreams (Game Play)

Once you're done rolling up the characters, the group appears in the town of Gull. This is a good place to save the game, right before you do anything else. T&T has day and night (along with days in the week, weeks in the month, and months in the year), and all shops close at sunset. If you spend too much time wandering around, you could find everything closed for the evening and have to wait another day to buy anything.

Therefore, it's best to save the game, explore, check out prices, etc., then restore the game and go buy what you need. Fighters should purchase the best armor they can, plus a hand weapon and shield. The Rogue and Mage can do nicely with slings (ammunition for slings is endless and always available). Remember to keep the manual handy when purchasing weapons and armor. All of them have minimum requirements for strength and dexterity, and mages are fairly restricted in what they can use; for a long time, the mage will have no better armor than leather (they were supposed to be able to wear lamellar, but that was not programmed in).

Random encounters in Gull are few; most take place in a little corner just before you enter the "bad" part of town (where the only tavern is located), and throughout the sewers beneath. Otherwise, the combats are pre-set in specific locations.

However, I cannot emphasize enough the need to save often during play. There are just too many deathtraps and gotchas scattered around the game (in Gull and elsewhere) which can lead to frustrating experiences. For instance, near the northern edge of the town of Valdemarton is a door. It looks like it would lead out to the wilderness; in actual fact, it opens onto a very nasty two-level dungeon. The door is one-way, so you must go on once you're inside. The team also gets shot in the back with poisoned arrows from concealed archers as they move down the first corridor.

What's bad about this is that there is absolutely no indication whatsoever that the door leads to a dungeon. No signs, no warnings, nothing — and given its position, it's all too easy to make the mistake of thinking that the door is simply an exit to the countryside. An unprepared party will be in for a very unpleasant time (on the other hand, this dungeon has a couple of very nice goodies, so it's worthwhile entering when you're ready for it).

Blind Rendition (Misdirection)

There is no one to really talk to in the game (i.e. no conversations in the style of an *Ultima* or *Magic Candle*). You do run across people who impart valuable bits of important, if obscure, information, but this is along the lines of "they tell you, and you take notes." You can expect to take a fair amount of notes.

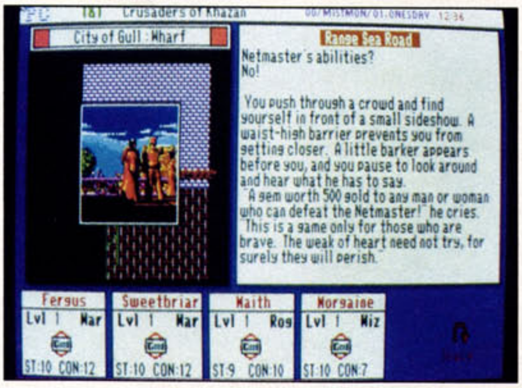
Unfortunately, having taken the notes, you must then separate the wheat from the chaff. Some things were not programmed in as originally designed and the clues relating to these situations were never changed. The biggest gaffe among them is the one about "teaching a rogue to teach a rogue."

Originally, the Rogue was supposed to learn the "Teacher" spell under special circumstances that would remove Khara Kang's protection against attacks. Apparently, this entire routine was too difficult to program, so it never went into the game (use a death wand on Kang instead; it works nicely). All the clues relating to it, however, remained as they were.

This is especially poor since defeating Kang is a major goal and you could waste much time trying to find a way to teach your Rogue a spell he can *never* learn. At the very least, these clues should have been removed or revised to reflect the actual situation.

In a similar vein, there is the matter of defeating Lerotra'hh. You acquire a weapon which is supposed to be the *only* means of affecting her. Unless you use it during the Unraeth, the five days that separate the old year from the new (a sort of in-between time), the javelin does not work. Fortunately, however, the same death wand that works on Kang will work on Lerotra'hh. Just be certain that you do Kang first, as any hand weapon that hits Lerotra'hh will shatter.

One more thing needs to be mentioned. During a mini-quest in the game, you must go north and climb to the top of an ice temple. There you pick up several clues, including one that says you must have a female dwarf in the party to finish the game. That isn't true, and in this case, a good thing. Imagine if you had come so far in the game, only to find you had to drop someone and go look for a female dwarf, of all things. This is one of the few instances in the game where the change in design was positive instead of negative. Now if they'd only gotten around to fixing up the clue itself, everything would have been fine.



Double Blind (Peculiarities)

Aside from bogus hints, the game has several "seams" which the canny (or unscrupulous) player can use to obtain advantages. There is a way to acquire virtually unlimited wealth in the sewers. In "The Digs" (Lerotra'hh's special hangout), characters can go up in level by doing nothing more than trying to climb up a shaft (tedious but effective). There is at least one mini-quest in the game (regarding the Red Orcs) that can be short-circuited so that your party receives the reward without actually having completed the mission.

Combat has its own peculiarities. When fighting starts, the screen changes to a close-up of the area, similar to the old *Ultimas* (pre-VI). Your party is ranged along the bottom of the screen in a single line. Monsters are across the top, in one or more lines, depending on how many of them there are. Each character and monster has a separate icon.

Who moves when is determined mostly by speed; faster combatants move sooner, and also further, than slower ones. Characters get one attack per round until they reach seventh level, at which time they can attack twice (regardless of profession). That, however, does not apply to spells; a mage or rogue can still cast only one spell per round.

The main problem with combat (aside from its boring sameness) has to do with invisibility. First, once the spell is cast, you no longer see your characters on the screen. You only know where they are on a character's turn, when a box surrounds his or her position. So far, that's interesting. However, monsters capable of spells or missile fire have no such handicaps. While they cannot *see* the characters for purposes of hand-to-hand combat, they are able to hit with spells or missiles with pinpoint accuracy. So, you are treated to the spectacle of watching some monsters walk blindly past the party while other critters (of the same type) merrily blast you away.

In terms of design, the game is very fragmented. There are few guides as to where to go or what to do. Much time is spent trekking around in the out of doors and hoping you haven't missed something important. Auto-mapping is some help here; at least you can use it to see where you haven't been yet.

Stepping on every spot is necessary, as the game is "trigger"-dependent. Events happen only when you enter a certain square. Aside from the towns, there are no visible clues on the screen that anything special is there, so you really have to march all over the place.

Not everything in the outdoors is related to the main story. Occasionally, you will come across ways to increase the character stats or learn a language. Knowing some languages is important and is one of the few bright spots in the game. At the very least, the party members should learn Orcish, Primus, and Foulspeak. Picking up the others can also come in handy.

Actually, it isn't surprising that the game has so uncoordinated a feel to it. Much of the design was taken from individual T&T scenario books and woven into one complete adventure. Ergo, the plotline and events are not as tightly constructed as they could have been and the bugs make it much worse.

Considering all the problems, you have to wonder what was going on at **New World** with this game. How could the playtesters have missed so many flaws? Were they sleepwalking through this one? If they didn't miss them, why weren't fixes made before the game went out the door? It looks as though **New World** needs better testers, or else they decided to go for the quick bucks instead of taking the extra time to put out a quality product.

Either way, it's a shame. *Tunnels and Trolls* could have been a good game. As it stands, the only people likely to enjoy it are hardcore *T&T* fans. I can't, alas, recommend this to anyone else. **CGW**

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Wizardry Forges into the 21st Century

Sir-Tech's Bane of the Cosmic Forge

By Marc Clupper

One hundred and twenty years past, an unholy alliance formed between the Lord of this castle and a mighty sorcerer. Their purpose was to control the stylus of fate, the Cosmic Forge which can create and destroy with written words. As their fates were sealed by their own evil, so now, the fates of these six adventures have also been closed...

TITLE:	WIZARDRY: Bane of the Cosmic Forge
SYSTEM:	IBM (640K), Amiga, and Macintosh
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	David W. Bradley
PUBLISHER:	Sir-Tech Software, Inc. Ogdensburg, New York

It has been nearly a decade since the release of the award-winning *Wizardry* gaming system. Now, **Sir-Tech**'s goal is to bring Wizardry into the 1990's with an all-new gaming system. More than a continuation of either story lines or mechanics, *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* possesses a "heart" of its own, in which the designer hopes to base an entirely new world of *Wizardry* products. *Bane* is approximately four times larger than previous *Wizardry* products and is designed to accommodate several possible endings in order to avoid the "bane" of many computer game designers, linearity.



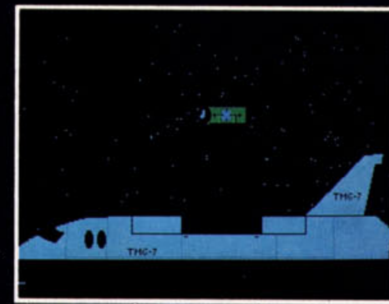
Building Character

First, characters must be "generated" using an intriguing and logical program which allows for the individuality of the player to come into action. The program also offers a large database of character portraits which may be drawn from at any point in the game. Once this is accomplished, the characters will endure the initial "baptism of fire" in the ancient castle of the Lord and his Queen. The player will "imprint" the personalities of each character by means of the player's behavior throughout the course of the game. So, amidst the glories and hardships found in the mountains, forests, swamps, temples and tombs, the player fleshes out both story *and* character in a welcome departure from more standard CRPG fare.

Bane's true virtues rest not only within the scope of the theme, but also in the game's mechanics. *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* may be the closest to providing a true fantasy role-playing "feel" of any similar program. Characters emerge from a culture with eleven races, and players choose professions for the characters out of fourteen basic professions, but the most interesting aspect of character generation is selection of various skills. Emerging from three different influences, skills are introduced via the following three areas of study: Weaponry, Physical, and Academia. Within these areas are multiple skills in which characters may strive to become masters. To show something of the detail involved here, the warrior classes must prepare and study the various advantages to primary and secondary attacks, thrusts, and melee attacks. In short, *Bane* reflects a tremendous amount of research with regard to exotic skills and weaponry.

In addition, the computer comes closer to becoming a referee which allows players to choose from numerous options, rather than the traditionally directive "play by my rules" type system. This greater freedom, in turn, allows a player greater access to the fantasy world and introduces less hassle from the program. The die rolls are generally well-balanced against each character's attributes and traits, and an interesting method of "rolling" the dice allows players more interactive liber-

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ty when picking locks or participating in combat. The gamer is even required to do some brain work when determining the nature of various traps and devices. *Bane* is definitely a game to challenge both the logical and imaginative facets of the mind.

In addition, the interface is designed to be almost transparent. The easy-to-learn key strokes and/or mouse interface allows players quick access to all available screens. Also whenever a parser is needed in order to communicate to the non-player characters in the fantasy world, a more natural "English" parser allows players to communicate more naturally than the VERB-NOUN-PREPOSITION-OBJECT of many adventure games. At no point should players feel as if the computer is restricting their actions. Instead, gamers may find themselves hard-pressed to make use of all of their available freedom.

Face The Music

In *Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge*, David Bradley has opted away from several conventions of recent CRPGs. With regard to both music and map development, he has taken a different path. Rather than the "traditional" 20x20 square grid system used for so many maps, players may find it refreshing to see that no such symmetrical pattern exists in Bane. Instead, Bradley has designed asymmetrical and three-dimensional layouts more consistent with true FRP.

Further, instead of what Bradley perceives as the "annoying" music that many products present, Bradley opted to use digitized sounds (rather than sound card music) to reflect the explosions and sound of steel striking steel in the combat scenes, as well as sounds of footsteps, slamming doors, and moving water within the dungeon explorations. This reviewer was particularly impressed with the deep bellow of the Horn of Souls as it cried above the crashing waves. Of course, one has to wonder how much better it would have been with sound board support.

The animations are impressive, too. Those who own the program will continually look forward to seeing what new creatures might jump out of the cracks and from behind the mountains. Seeing a saber-wielding phantom appearing from behind a wall could send many an adventurer diving for cover. Each of the three-dimensional creatures depicted has been painstakingly rendered and animated. Even flying creatures cast their shadows against the ground in an eerie dance of death.

Purists will complain that a sixteen-color palette is not comparable to the 256-color palettes available in many games, but the dithered approach to Bane's colorful graphics is not unpleasant to the eyes and may be the equal of some true VGA games.

Forging Ahead

Sir-Tech has made it apparent that *Bane* is not simply a one-time event. Rather, it is the beginning of a whole new series of *Wizardry* games based on the new gaming system. Players will find that the craftsmanship and quality of *Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge* make it a triumphant celebration of the *Wizardry* heritage and provides a legacy almost predestined to repeat the glory of its predecessor. **CGW**

Tips and Strategies

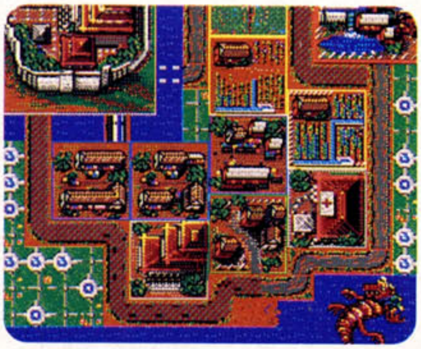
(1) Players will find that the ability to change professions will allow them to build characters with strengths and skills which will surpass those of any *single* profession. For example, by grooming a master mage and then transferring over to the arts of Alchemy, the character will retain the full knowledge of their previous craft and have new access to the powerful abilities of another profession with minimal delay. It is advisable that no more than one character at a time do this, as their ability to use their former skills are retarded until they once again reach new levels of power. However, the flip side of this is that characters progress at a faster rate as they are "deeper" into experience-rich environments.

(2) The player should have little fear of dropping important items since the design philosophy behind Bane has made it impossible for the user to mistakenly discard an item that has importance at a later time. Hint: Although the immediate consequence of such an item may be unknown at the time, a little experimentation will usually provide for an answer. If all else fails, try "merging" items in your inventory to see if something new may arise.

(3) The game relies on a lot of common-sense problems. So, if an answer does not reveal itself immediately, try taking a break and thinking about what the characters of a party possess in terms of skills and items. A great deal of logical foresight has been programmed into the game system.

(4) Although mapping is not essential to the successful completion of the game, it may well save time in the long run, as well as offering insight to the possible locales of yet undiscovered realms.

MOVE TO A NEW CITY.



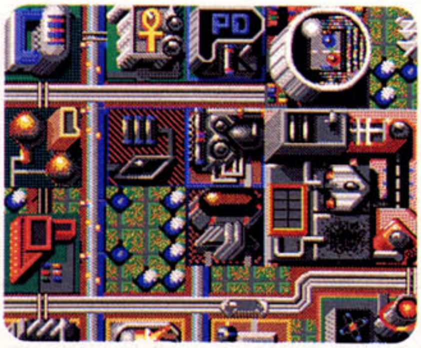
As a Shogun in Ancient Asia, you hold the secrets to the Orient. And the keys to an empire.



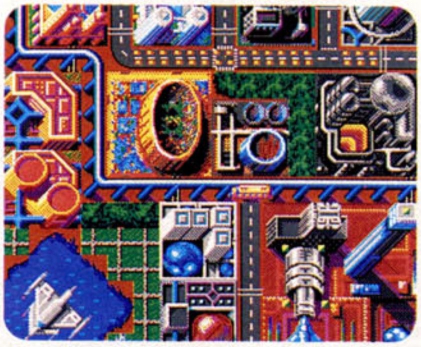
Serfs up! Thou art king or queen of your castle. Beware of plagues, dragons, witches, and other legendary dangers.



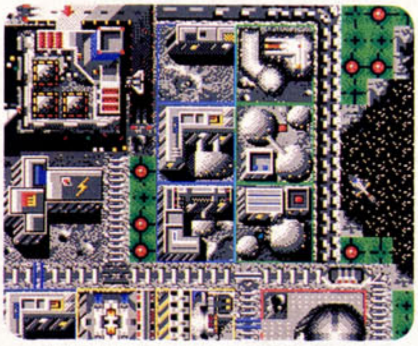
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Making New Connections

Some BBS and Network Games



For those who have never played a multi-player game using their modems, here are some ideas which may be of use. This article is *not* a complete "paiktography" of on-line games. Rather, it is a "sampler" for the benefit of those who have not yet discovered the variety of on-line gaming. Those who wish to subscribe to the fee-based networks should call the following numbers for more information: **Compuserve** (1-800-848-8990), **Consumer Sports Network** (1-800-727-4636), **GEnie** (Voice: 1-800-638-9636 Modem: 1-800-638-8369, then type "HHH", at U# type "XTX99598,GEnie"), **PCLink** (1-703-448-8700) or **PRODIGY** (1-914-993-8000). The $ symbol means that there are extra charges beyond standard on-line rates.

Achilles' Leisure: *CGW* subscriber Walt Kunz runs a local BBS which is primarily dedicated to computer gaming. Readers in the 914 area code or those who can afford to spend a bit in long distance charges are invited to check out the system at (914) 691-9248. There are no costs beyond those standard to Ma Bell's customers and the BBS regularly has play-by-mail *Reach for the Stars, Empire* and *Omega* using file uploads.

Air Warrior: GEnie's multi-player air combat game was reviewed in *CGW #67*, but the game now has several new features. An on-board "camera" feature allows on-line combat to be saved to disk for future viewing; gunnery mechanics now require pilots to "lead" the target with their shots; the "drones" in the training arena function much more like real planes; and a new regional map is now available. ($)

APBA General Manager: The **Computer Sports Network** offers fantasy baseball leagues with a twist. Players not only draft teams and handle trades on-line, but they download lineups and play games off-line with *APBA Major League Players Baseball* and upload the results to be included in the league standings. **CSN** offers a special deal on purchasing *APBA* products in order to participate in their leagues. ($)



Bulls and Bears: On PCLink, Promenade and America Online, players can participate in a competition where each player tries to build the fastest-growing stock portfolio. Each player gets an account full of "play money" and proceeds to buy and sell stock on-line as though he/she had a brokerage account with one of the on-line brokerage firms.

CEO: **PRODIGY** offers an economic strategy game which puts players into the role of corporate executives. Bearing much similarity to **Reality Technologies**' *Venture Magazine Business Simulator* (i.e. read memos and reports, assimilate data and make decisions), *CEO* offers fifteen days of competition in one of six glamor industries (automobile, beer, computers, chocolate, soft drinks and toys). Each day's decisions reflect a year in "game time" and the computer will "cover" for players who cannot sign on every day.

Dragon's Gate: GEnie's new multi-player fantasy game uses a text interface a la *Gemstone III* (see p. 53), but game mechanics for magick and combat are different and the "races" differ radically from those in most fantasy games. ($).

Fantasy Sports: No matter the season, Compuserve offers "rotisserie" style leagues at no extra fee. Baseball, football and hockey are most popular. Compuserve subscribers should type "Go Fans" to reach the sports area.

Feudal Intrigue: *Diplomacy* players who are interested in customizing games to the size and style they like best should consider GEnie's games of diplomatic intrigue. Played by electronic mail, players can select the number of participants in each game and rules from nearly any "Dippy" variant ever played. ($)

Fleet Maneuvers: This space combat game is actually a play-by-mail game, but players can also play-by-electronic-mail using the company's local BBS. The game is extremely playable in either format and there *is* a per turn charge. Call 1-303-761-4048 to reach the BBS.

Quantum Space: PCLink, Promenade and America Online offer their own play-by-electronic-mail game of space conquest. Those who've always wanted to try a play-by-mail game but didn't want to wait for the U.S. Mail for the results will want to consider this competition.

Sniper!: A two-person game of World War II infantry combat, players compete on a grid-based landscape where colored ASCII characters represent terrain features. On-line scenarios allow players to learn the mechanics of the game by playing against the computer, but the name of the game is facing off against a human opponent and debriefing the 20-30 minute competition, later. The meeting area and scores list serve to provide a "community building" function. ($)

Tournament Golf: Using **Accolade**'s *Mean 18*, the Computer Sports Network allows players to download courses, play them off-line and upload their saved games in order to compete in multi-player tournaments. ($) **CGW**

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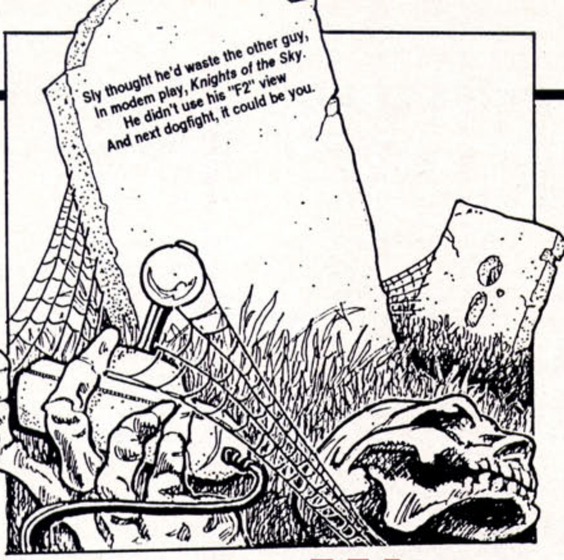
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Opponents Wanted

This is a new feature being offered by Computer Gaming World *magazine. Here, players can challenge the "human intelligence" that lurks behind another's brains, instead of just whipping the computer's artificial intelligence all the time. Care to post a bulletin on this bulletin board? Go ahead, reach out and crush someone!*

How to Write an Opponents Wanted Ad

It's really very simple. Just send us a postcard (or use the NOTES section of your Reader Input Device card), and include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than "by direct modem" can be listed (trading save game disks, meeting someone on a BBS service or even face-to-face). At least one (possibly more) telephone numbers should be included. *Do not forget the area code* and mention whether they are Home, Work or Modem-line number. For example: H (213) 555-2879; W (818) 555-1940; or M (213) 555-1715. Finally, include your city and State, so that people calling will both: a) have a clue as to what time zone you are in and won't end up waking you at 3 o'clock in the morning and b) recognize it when they see it on their phone bill.

We reserve the right to edit all Opponents Wanted ads to our standards of taste. Below is a sample *of an actual ad.*

Actual Ad

Veteran wargamer seeks opponents by modem for *Command HQ*. Will play any scenario, any side. Southern California (714, 213 and 818) area code opponents preferred, but am willing to assume *some* long distance charges during low rate hours (be merciful). Contact Alan Emrich at home: (213) 420-7800 to arrange for a playing time. Lakewood, California. **CGW**

Dark Future

Apocalyptic Cyberpunk in Dynamix's Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon



Future offices of CGW international headquarters ➡

TITLE:	Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon
SYSTEM:	IBM (w/ 640K) Hard Disk/Mouse Recommended
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Jeff Tunnell
PUBLISHER:	Dynamix (Division of Sierra) Coarsegold, CA

Darker and more visually threatening than **Interplay**'s *Neuromancer* or even **Infocom**'s *Circuit's Edge, Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon* captures the shadowy underworld of cyberpunk better than any other computer game to date and artistically captures a dark future reminiscent of the film, *Blade Runner*. If one understands cyberpunk as the equivalent of novelist William Gibson's aphorism, "The streets have their own uses for technology," one will certainly understand the premise behind *Rise of the Dragon* (*Dragon*).

For *Rise of the Dragon*, Jeff Tunnell envisioned a menacing metropolis where genetic research had gone awry. In his conception, street gangs would manufacture deadly genetic mutating skin patches in seedy warehouse laboratories, much like gangs manufacture PCP in makeshift laboratories in today's world. To heighten the fear, Tunnell introduced an oriental apocalypse. In this case, a legendary force called Bahumat, described as an evil warlord from circa 3000 B.C. who was believed to metamorphose into a dragon in order to destroy his enemies and was expected to return in a time of chaos and decay, much like the Roman Emperor Domitian was believed to be Nero reincarnate. This villain looms in the background and wields the frightening force of the Tongs. The latter, oriental street gangs, are not named in the game, but the shadowy menace associated with Tong violence is effective in conveying the insidious threat to society. The story *does* have light points, however, since Bahumat was alleged to have been defeated by a mighty knife-wielding hero named Gin-Su. One person in the game believes that *Blade* Hunter is the reincarnation of *Gin-Su*.

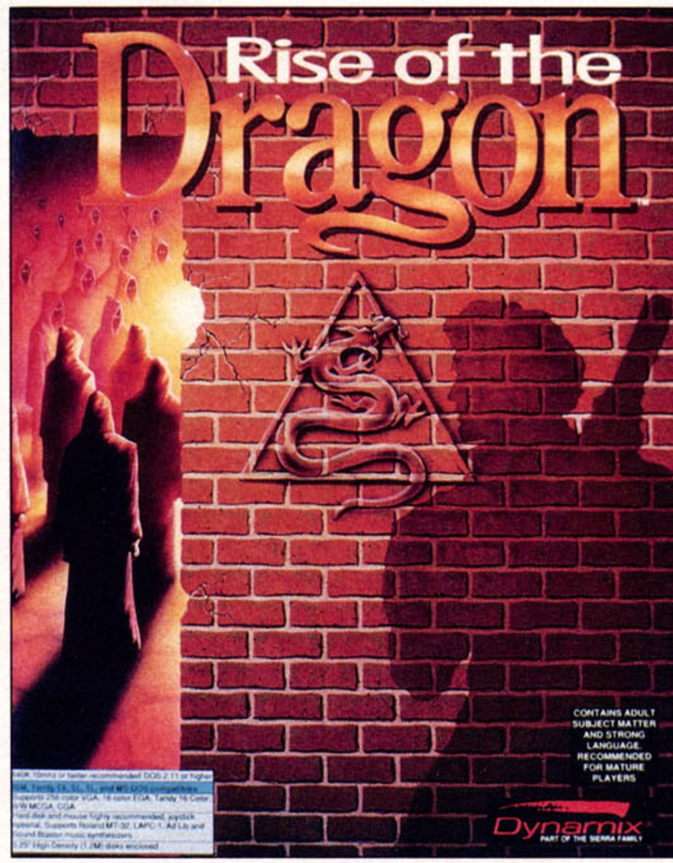
In order to convey this ominous setting, Tunnell recruited a production unit that almost rivals a small Hollywood production. Don Latarski scored the program and his musical references run the gamut from overtones of Bach's "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor" through oriental riffs punctuated by flute and forward into bass guitar runs that conjure men of action from Peter Gunn through James Bond. Robert Caracol, a "comic" illustrator, etched the original artist's conceptions of the characters and settings in pen and ink. Then, Brian Hahn and Mike Brenneman brought the images to the computer screen with just the right color palette to make players believe they have entered the deteriorating world of that dark future. The entire product is a work of art from start to finish.

Finally, to give the game an even more cinematic look, as well as to keep the tension taut by reminding the player that the clock is running, "cut scenes" are interspersed and display what is happening in other areas of the city. These "cut scenes" are non-interactive and simply unfold with some animation and plenty of dialogue in order to advance the plot.

Don't Point That Thing at Me!

Like the rest of the **Sierra** family, **Dynamix** is divorcing itself from the parser in attempting to bring graphic adventures to life. With "point & click" technology, one doesn't have to guess the right verb or, ideally, figure out which objects are active from on-screen clues rather than having to clicking on everything.

In *Dragon*, exits are revealed by the cursor metamorphosing, naturally enough, into an exit sign and active objects are often tipped off by flashing lights or the cursor transforming into a magnifying glass. Mouse users can quickly examine just about any object by clicking on the right mouse button and receiving, in turn, a description of the object. The descriptions, often rather amusing, reference both useful items and "window dressing."



Conversation is handled according to a classic non-parser convention. The game displays a conversation balloon whenever the cursor touches a character within the game that has something to say. Then, players simply click on the characters and the conversation begins. Menus of potential questions and replies pop up in response to the conversation and/or answers provided by various characters. Then, after the player clicks on the best response/question for Hunter to use, the conversation branches accordingly. Jerry Luttrell and David Selle did an excellent job of augmenting the conversations with realistic dialogue.

The game also features two methods of handling equipment/items. There is a main inventory which allows the player to check on Hunter's status, examine items, place them on Hunter's person, or drop them outside the window to be picked up and used by Hunter. In addition, a quick inventory allows the player to access an item in inventory and immediately operate the item on the playing environment *without* having to interact with the image of Hunter.

The "point and click" interface also works well for handling **Dynamix**'s standard VCR interface in which the toggles for options (joystick, mouse, sound effects, and music), as well as controls for difficulty level (for arcade sequences), text speed, and detail level may be found. The VCR interface is so named because the control panel emulates the sliders and buttons to be found on a modern electronic entertainment device.

What Do I Do Next?

The game is full of locations to explore. Once Hunter makes it to the transit station (the long-awaited Metro Rail?), the transit map indicates which locations are currently active. Initially, this is limited to Blade's apartment building, his girlfriend's building, city hall and the pleasure dome. As Hunter uncovers the right clues, a new location pops up and Hunter has someplace new to explore. Often, such exploration will net a new location and so on. The transit map was a wonderful way of handling game geography (just like the overhead maps in **Lucasfilm**'s recent *The Secret of Monkey Island* helped one keep a grasp on where the game was going and where one was within the context of the game) and "gating" the protagonist through the plot at the right pace.

Once the player has entered a location, it is wise to be alert to every "exit sign" on the screen. Each time the cursor transforms into one, there is a new location to be explored. Most locations seem to have something helpful (whether information, item or encounter). This reviewer thought that every location was rich with detail (including the exterior of the *CGW* building) and offered a marvelous texture of graphic art.

Not Just Another Arcade Game

Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon has a marvelous story line, magnificent sound and musical score, near-transparent interface and plenty to discover. Yet, it also has arcade sequences. This reviewer, like many other adventure gamers, absolutely disdains arcade sequences. Why should one painstakingly puzzle out the various conundrums associated with a game, only to be foiled by a lack of reflexes? Why do so many game designers have to put those sequences in?

Fortunately, **Dynamix** heard the lament of adventure gamers who loathe arcade sequences. Even though they are present in the game, they are present in a non-obtrusive manner. Should the gamer fail to "pass the test" over the course of several tries, the story advances anyway. Sure, there will be those purists who protest that this means the arcade sequence is meaningless, therefore it shouldn't have been there in the first place, but its presence simply adds value to those who want an action sequence in order to feel like a film or television detective. Investigation and interrogation are simply not going to be enough for some of the folks who will be attracted to *Dragon*, so **Dynamix** tried to meet their need *without* ruining the game for the "rest of us." This certainly seems to be a worthy design decision and this reviewer applauds it.

Order Your "Gin-Su" Now

Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon signals several advances. First, the technology which enabled **Dynamix** to move from "comic" to a magnificently textured graphic adventure proves that, in the future, "filling up" a CD may not be as expensive as had been previously supposed. Secondly, it proves that adapting a graphic adventure to "point and click" technology does not mean it cannot be both well-written and offer stimulating discoveries for the adventure gamer. Finally, the careful blending of music, art and adventure demonstrates that there *can* be multimedia products in the future that can offer good gameplay *and* good entertainment. *Blade Hunter: Rise of the Dragon* is not only an outstanding product in its own right, but points the way for the future of graphic adventures.

CGW

No Nukes Is Good Nukes

Part One of a Command HQ *Replay*

by Alan Emrich

Caracas "Red" player: Alan Emrich
Belgrade "Blue" player: Dennis Lytton

Command HQ by **Microprose** *offers a diversity of scenarios from WWI to WWV. This article is a recounting of an actual game using the "2023 Scenario," otherwise known as WWIV. The game begins with each player controlling five cities, four bases, six oil wells and $600 billion dollars. From that point, allies must be secured through "foreign aid," units must be purchased and deployed, intelligence scans conducted, and a grand strategy for victory determined and implemented. To truly get the "feel" for a game of* Command HQ, *this replay is written as a "historical" narrative.*

[Note about photographs: All of the screen shots for this article are black and white, so it is difficult to distinguish the opposing forces of red and blue. Here is the secret: all red forces face to the left (or west) and all blue forces face to the right (or east).]

The Histories

Here, the initial superpowers are described.

The world had changed over the past 30 years. Between the 1990's and the fateful year of WWIV, 2023, *trade* became the key to world power. The rising economic superpowers of Eastern Europe, with their capital in Budapest, and Latin America, with their capital in Caracas, were in a state of change. For the Latins, it was their moment in the sun. For the Slavs, it was their hour of destiny.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s and the successful American Separatists Campaign led by extremist movements from both the left and right (which, as we all know, led to the secession of the Eastern U.S. seaboard and precipitated their union with an emerging Latin American brotherhood, thanks to the rising influence of Cuba, Mexico and Puerto Rico), the stage was set for the dawn of "the new world." Promising a "new order based on new ideas," the leaders in Caracas initiated a global political campaign to secure maximum strategic advantage for their thinly disguised bid at world domination.

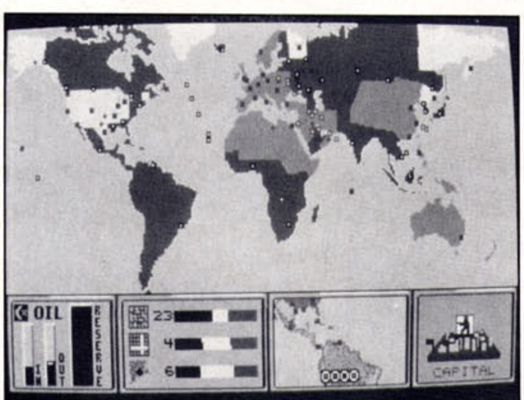
In Budapest, following the recent collapse of the EEC, leaders were quick to perceive the imminent threat from across the Atlantic, but they were a people divided. The pan-Slavic leadership knew that the earlier Western Europe was united and made whole and productive again, the more likely were the prospects for peace.

The Cold War

Here, the five minute game period before the allowable commencement of hostilities is described in terms of purchasing allies through Foreign Aid.

Like a chess game on a global board, the first moves were made by the pawns. The Latins struck fast, securing Canada and isolating the rest of what was once the United States. The rest of the Western Hemisphere was brought in line, while moves across the oceans were being considered.

The Slavs plowed their diplomatic and economic efforts into rebuilding a greater EEC, uniting Central and Western Europe with their eastern kin. It was a slow process and the delay was an opportunity not wasted on Caracas.



Global deployment at the outbreak of war. Note the red sub cordon in the North Atlantic.

Back in South America, it was decided upon a strategy of building a wall and letting the enemy tire by bashing their heads upon it. Russia was selected as the right ally to be the "anvil" to receive the enemy blows (after all, how many armies had Russia defeated since the Mongols?). The way to the enemy's capital at Belgrade would be too tough through Western Europe, it was reckoned, so the "hammer" would fall from the south. To this end, Japan was seen as the hammer's forge, where strength could be built up, and a campaign through China, Egypt, then up into the Balkans would be the overall plan of attack (although it has been wisely said that "no plan survives the first contact with the enemy). Liddel Hart would call it an "indirect approach" on a global scale.

The beleaguered blue boys of Belgrade felt bereaved by the bitter bulletins. China was secured as a buffer against Japan and Russia, now painted in "South American Red" on the geo-political map. Isolated and poorly supplied, how long could China be expected to last?

Within a short while, the "Red Devils" of Latin America had secured India, a dagger poised at the heart of vital "blue" oilfields located in the Middle East; then South Africa threw in with the red menace. Belgrade blue, however, became the color of allegiance in Australia, perhaps the balancing lever blue needed in the Pacific.

Para Bellum (Prepare for War)

Here, the five minute game period before the allowable commencement of hostilities is described in terms of purchasing military units and deploying them for the upcoming war.

All the while, the troops were mobilizing...

The blue legions deployed for defense in the Pacific, while elsewhere placing two huge offensive forces (consisting mainly of tanks and airplanes). The

greater of these two juggernaughts was deployed in the Middle East, where the quick securing of the vital oilfields would be deemed of paramount importance. The second force was to be ready to mount an invasion of Russia. Hopefully, this "defensive aggression" against Russia would prove more successful than the evil campaigns of Hitler, Napoleon and Charles XII of Sweden.

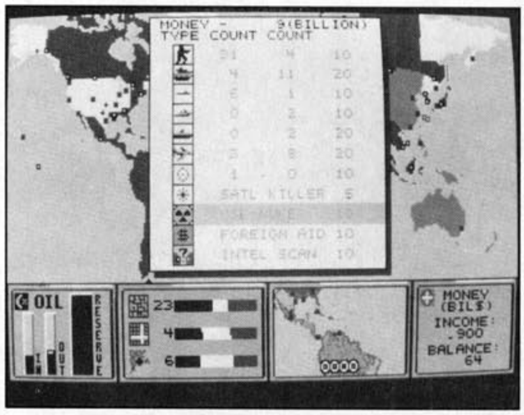
The red soldiers were deployed strictly for defense in Russia, while in the Pacific, a quick campaign to secure China was readied (intelligence scans showed that blue had left the area devoid of any serious forces). Back in Caracas, a decision was made to secure the former United States, still a neutral white on the map and engaged in a bloody "war of unification" with their Eastern (red) brethren. The Americans would be surrounded like their native sons once circled the homesteaders, as the red forces deployed in an iron ring around their neutral borders. If only the blue forces could be kept out of the western hemisphere, then a solid economic base and a two-ocean threat would be enjoyed by the red forces of Caracas.

The Balance of Power

Here, the "hot" war's at-start forces are compared.

The ledger of forces when the war commenced look fairly even on paper, but the advantage seemed to be with red if only by the defensive nature of the terrain red held. South America had an economy based upon 23 cities, while Yugoslavia had but 18 in a world comprised of 50 total major economic areas. Both sides had the four bases and six oil wells with which they started, but the cash reserves were quite skewed with the red budget down to a mere 9 billion and nearing that stage where their balance would be written in the same color ink as their flag flew, while blue had much greater flexibility by holding onto an aristocratic 64 billion at start.

(This, then, is the reason red declared war; broke, deployed and ready, they hoped that blue still needed more time to make final purchases and last-second troop redeployments. Thinking that they just might catch blue unprepared, red flashed into a quick and callous declaration of war. This is a sound, albeit amoral, strategy for cold war and truce time play: be the first to hit the war button in hopes the opponent is woefully unprepared somewhere).



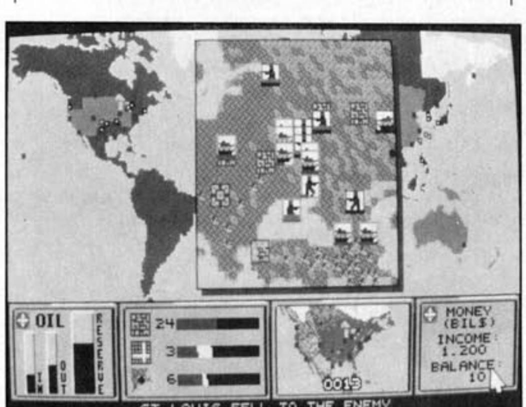
Initial balance of forces (red in column 1, blue in column 2), showing red's oil shortfall and blue's financial situation.

The balance of initial forces stacked up as shown in the photo at the top of this page. Note that five of the red submarines were formed as a "cordon" in the North Atlantic to prevent any European intervention in the affairs of the western hemisphere, often referred to as red's "Cordon Bleu."

In analyzing the compositions of the world's military forces, blue was ready for a decisive, blitzkrieg-style war with all of their expensive tanks and airplanes, while red was preparing for the long haul with lots of defensive infantry and a larger economy from which to build up strength over time.

Turns 1-7, Opening Moves

After the five minutes of "cold war" are up, either player may declare a "hot" war and start the shooting at any time. From this point on, economies slow, troops commence to fire upon each other, troop deployments take longer, cities go "off line" after a unit is produced, air strikes commence and, generally, all hell (er... war) breaks loose (unless broken by the rare two-minute "cease fire"). This, then, is the war.



Blue's brilliant blitz in the Ukraine, contrasted with red's siege of the U.S.

The first moves in any great war are often the most studied. World War IV would be no exception. While Caracas was the most prepared and "declared" war, it was Belgrade blue first out of the gate with a perfectly executed, combined arms assault on the Ukrainian city of Kharkov in Russia, complete with paratroops, tanks and air support. The lone red army there could resist for only five turns (the situation in Russia looked very promising, indeed, from the blue end of the table). In the Middle East, blue was still in the throes of preparation when hostilities broke out, but Belgrade immediately launched satellites to establish a network of "baby blues" in the skies above.

The legions of South America (the "Red Bandana Republic?") began painting the globe red by getting their Russian allies to start securing bases and converting their oil supplies to wartime production (*i.e., "purchased" allies' oil wells and bases always remain neutral and must be "captured" by the purchasing player in order to enjoy their benefits*). Then, Houston fell, as if struck by red lightning, as Caracas invaded the neutral United States. In the next instant, the Americas threw in with their comrades in Western Europe. With so many red soldiers deployed on the borders and closing in like the crushing death grip of a mailed fist, the question was whether blue could mobilize enough American forces in time.

Turns 8-22, Act I, Scene II

The formerly neutral Americans quickly raised an infantry army in Detroit and tank army in Denver. The infantry was quickly ordered, like the revolutionary army of 1775, to a fateful and disastrous campaign in Canada. The Canadians mobilized a second infantry army, and the American militia was soon overpowered. (*An important lesson: Tanks are superior on offense and infantry on defense. The fate of these two American units underscores both of these points*).

The American armor proved an interesting "loose cannon." Initially marching for the Texas oilfields (blue forces already feeling the effects of an oil shortage draining their strategic reserve), strong Latin forces had them turning tail for the central Canadian oil fields in short order.

The blue in Russia quickly moved from Kharkov to Smolensk, but an interesting

lack of attack coordination caused the sand in blue's hourglass to accelerate toward an overripened (all right, rotten) conclusion. Three blue armor units from Kiev literally sat inert, calmly watching six turns of battle while blue forces from Kharkov attacked unsupported from the south. Red was buying time and blue was *paying* for it by not managing the offensive more carefully.

This is an example of how global distractions over several fronts can prevent a player from concentrating enough mental focus on vital sectors during crucial periods of heightened military activity. When a player can get in there with the mouse and "micromanage" all the details of a battle (particularly the air strikes), the tactics employed in that battle will, more often than not, prove both successful and less costly to that player. It's all a trade-off in Command HQ, *however, because the price of a successfully micromanaged battle in one theater of the world might be the fate of the war in another.*

While the Blue Boys of Belgrade were pushing their Russian border eastward, their Middle Eastern contingent finally quit facing Mecca long enough to sluggishly get started on the conquest of Saudi Arabia. Blue forces were also dispatched from Iraq to seize the oilfields to the north in the formerly Russian Republic of Georgia. Finally, a naval diversion was launched by blue against red forces which had seized the bases on the Philippines. With no ground troop support, however, blue could not follow up on its naval superiority. (*Important lesson: Troops take ground. Without troops, successes at sea cannot be consolidated by conquests on the ground. Follow up naval victories with land attacks of either raid or invasion strength whenever possible*).

The Latin Legions of red were concentrating on their "stage one" objectives of securing all neutral bases and oil wells in Russia as quickly as possible; spreading their incarnadine gospel over the United States; and attempting Fabian tactics (costly attrition to attackers) in Russia. Unfortunately for red, by turn 22 the balance of forces in Russia was heavily in favor of blue, particularly in tanks and airplanes. Red decided that Russia's fate was sealed and, just as the Czarist armies did in 1918, the troops began to pull back to the perimeters of central Siberia and Archangel. There, it was hoped that the threat of "an army in being" on blue's borders would tie down



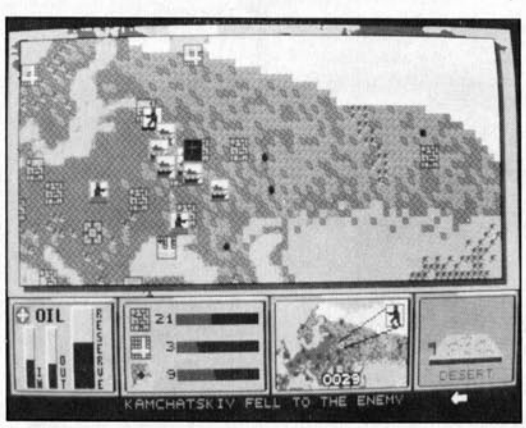
The blue attack stalls from a brief lack of "micromanagement."

those expensive blue tanks and airplanes and force them to waste away on fruitless garrison duty. The alternative for red risked loosing this blue thunderbolt unexpectedly upon a red outpost somewhere else in the world. Hence, it was deemed unacceptable. Consequently, the blue storm had to be both distracted and contained within Russia for as long as possible.

Turns 23-60, The End of the Beginning

By turn 30, the Caracas Cowboys had finished overrunning what was once the United States of America, securing the western hemisphere. Safe behind their North Atlantic submarine screen (remember the "Cordon Bleu?"), red was preparing to build up in North America and strike out across the oceans.

Red was on the defensive in other areas of the world, though. Seven blue tank armies were rolling virtually unopposed across Russia, preparing to secure its northern flank of Archangel. As a strategem, the red player loves to threaten exposed flanks. So, the crimson



Blue tanks blitz through Russia. Note number of blue cities, bases, & oil wells (window #2).

marauders launched a "sneak raid" from Iceland over to the blue base at Norway. This would place a red army in a superior position to threaten central Europe from the north, hopefully tying down even more blue tanks and planes on useless garrison duty.

By turn 41, the Norwegian gambit had paid off for red (who secured the undefended base there), but the blue economy was expanding at red's expense as a direct result of the blue conquests of Leningrad, Gorki and all of Russia west of the Ural mountains, save for Archangel (where the next blue blow would fall). Soon thereafter, Belgrade's forces won a telling naval battle that threatened to turn the Pacific into their blue heaven, but the land war was decided by yet *another* red sneak raid, this time launched from Seoul into undefended Beijing. (*Another lesson: Players must consider the value and consequences of sneak raids, compared to the cost of keeping garrisons to prevent their unopposed success*).

Out of the "blue," a striking force of two tank armies probed their way towards the two entrenched red infantry armies holed up in Archangel (the rest of red's forces in Russia were rebuilding in central Siberia around Novosibersk). The blue offensive westward attempting to secure central Siberia was quickly called off so that reinforcements could be sent to guarantee victory to the north at Archangel. Caracas knew that losing Archangel would begin to unhinge things in Russia, taking the pressure off of too many threatened blue cities and freeing up too many blue tanks and airplanes. Drastic measures were coldly calculated in Caracas...

Elsewhere in the world, Belgrade's blue boys tried *their* first unsupported "sneak raid." These are raids where a lone transport with no naval escort sails off to an obscure, backwater destination in hopes of seizing an ungarrisoned objective and "starting a fire" in the enemy's strategic flank or rear. The raiding unit is very much at risk during the trip and will usually fail in the raid if the objective should, in fact, be garrisoned. The costs, however, are usually cheap and the enemy is normally not in a position to ignore successful sneak raids.

The blue raid against the oil fields of Borneo, however, met with failure, as the objective was garrisoned by an entrenched infantry unit surrounded by hostile jungle terrain which attrits all who reside there. While Belgrade experienced a "Code Blue" (the rush to resuscitation)

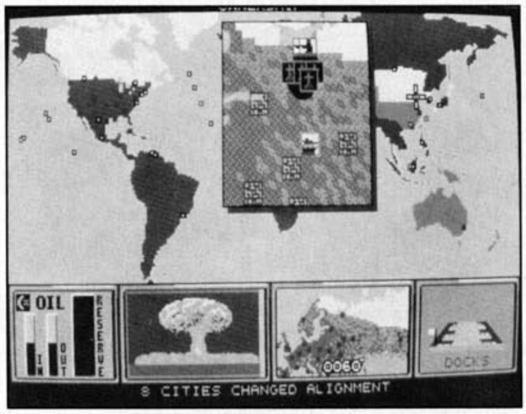
in Borneo, Caracas mobilized three tank armies, one infantry army, and three naval units with orders to form up around Hawaii. Thus, the flames of military preparation began to forge red's famous "Hawaiian Hammer."

What could have been the turning point in the war, however, was about to take place around the frozen port of Archangel in north-west Russia. Four blue tank armies concentrated to the south of that strategic base. Concentrated a bit too closely, in fact. In a world of nuclear weapons where world leaders keep their fingers on the button while they stare each other down, red's bloodshot eyes blinked first.

Atomic and Political Fallout

The bomb fell on turn 60, wiping out all four blue tank armies (an $80 billion investment on blue's part). A huge, nearly impassable nuclear wasteland was created which, ironically, served to greatly protect Archangel from the threat imposed by the blue forces remaining to the south. With about half of blue's boys now glowing in the dark, the teeth of their Russian offensive had been pulled. Suddenly, defensive options were being given due consideration in Belgrade as their supreme command sang the blues.

The political fallout, however, was severe. All five cities of Japan, plus Seoul, the newly conquered city of Beijing and red's dear old ally Canada packed up and went neutral in protest. Fortunately for red, most of the *armies* in these countries stayed loyal, so they were (reasonably) quickly reconquered. Even the first naval unit to arrive in Hawaii defected from red to blue, as did two of red's five submarines in the "Cordon Bleu" and one of the two armies in Bombay. In the North Atlantic, the three remaining subs hunted down the two chickens (er... defectors), while in India there was nothing short of a civil war between the bloody red and blackened blue armies present there (fortunately for red, their army remained entrenched, while blue's new troops were discovered unentrenched—a decisive advantage for the Venezualan vigilantes).



Red drops the big one and throws the balance of power way out of kilter.

The consequences of the political fallout changed the balance of economic power such that blue's economy, for the first time, exceeded red's. Caracas either had to quickly get things under control or stop planning for the "long haul." The chaos of needing to re-secure rear areas slowed red down for several turns, which afforded blue considerable advantage and possibly an easy route to victory.

(Tune in again, next issue, for "Opportunities Lost," "The Tide Turns," "Closing The Ring" and "Strategy Hints.") **CGW**



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See Reader Input Device on page 90

The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

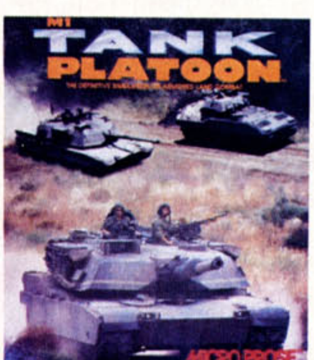
Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*69*	*10.51*
2.	*Their Finest Hour*	*LucasFilm*	*AC, SI*	*101*	*10.45*
3.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicroProse*	*ST*	*74*	*10.43*
4.	*Secret of Monkey Island*	*LucasFilm*	*AD*	*23*	*9.87*
5.	*Ultima VI*	*Origin*	*RP*	*70*	*9.80*
6.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*70*	*9.68*
7.	*SimCity*	*Maxis*	*ST, SI*	*128*	*9.64*
8.	*Wings*	*Cinemaware*	*AC*	*33*	*9.62*
9.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicroProse*	*SI,WG*	*70*	*9.60*
10.	*Command HQ*	*Microplay*	*WG*	*37*	*9.51*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	45	9.46
12.	MechWarrior	Activision	SI,RP	53	9.27
13.	Buck Rogers	SSI	AD	29	9.17
14.	Populous	EA	ST	115	9.13
15.	Hero's Quest	Sierra	AD,RP	54	9.12
16.	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	74	9.09
17.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
18.	Ultima V	Origin	RP	95	9.03
19.	Lords of the Rising Sun	Cinemaware	AC,ST	53	9.01
	Wasteland	EA	RP	119	9.01
21.	Second Front	SSI	WG	37	9.00
22.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
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26.	Battle Chess II	Interplay	ST	22	8.91
27.	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	62	8.90
28.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR	ST	86	8.87
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31.	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	29	8.86
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33.	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
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40.	Airborne Ranger	MicroProse	AC	74	8.76
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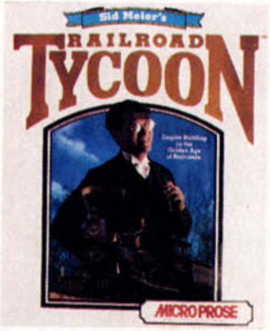
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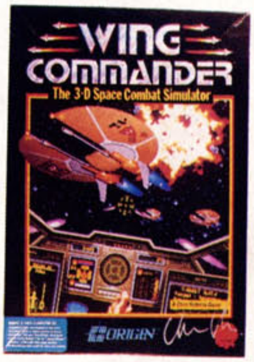
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No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
	Indy Jones & the Last Crusade Adventure	LucasFilm	AD	29	8.65
	Zany Golf	EA	AC	31	8.65
58.	Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	36	8.62
59.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	116	8.61
60.	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	65	8.60
61.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	58	8.59
62.	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	34	8.54
	It Came From the Desert	Cinemaware	AD	36	8.54
64.	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	24	8.53
65.	Carrier Command	MicroPlay	AC,WG	49	8.51
	DeathTrack	Activision	AC	29	8.51
	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	68	8.51
68.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	31	8.42
69.	TV Sports Football	Cinemaware	AC,ST	50	8.39
70.	Wings of Fury	Broderbund	AC	52	8.38
71.	Strike Fleet	EA	WG	79	8.37
72.	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	30	8.34
73.	Rocket Ranger	Cinemaware	AC,AD	75	8.32
74.	Modem Wars	EA	ST	24	8.29
	Police Quest II	Sierra	AD	39	8.29
	TV Sports Basketball	Cinemaware	AC,ST	33	8.29
77.	688 Attack Sub	EA	SI,ST	59	8.27
	Drakkhen	Data East	RP	32	8.27
79.	Flight of the Intruder	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	25	8.26
80.	Manhunter	Sierra	AD	72	8.25
81.	Centurion	EA	ST	49	8.24
82.	Police Quest	Sierra	AD	98	8.23
83.	Starglider II	Rainbird	AC	65	8.22
84.	Jack Nicklaus 18 Holes	Accolade	AC,ST	28	8.21
	Three Stooges	Cinemaware	AC	68	8.21
86.	A-10 Tank Killer	Dynamix	SI	46	8.20
	Leisure Suit Larry II	Sierra	AD	52	8.20
88.	Loom	LucasFilm	AD	38	8.18
89.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	AC,SI	31	8.16
90.	Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	AD	28	8.14
91.	Tetris	SpectrumHolobyte	AC,ST	46	8.13
92.	Conquests of Camelot	Sierra	AD	33	8.12
	Vette!	Spectrum Holobyte	AC	26	8.12
94.	Shiloh	SSI	WG	54	8.09
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96.	Knights of Legend	Origin	RP	26	8.08
97.	Speedball	Cinemaware	AC	35	8.06
98.	Russia	SSG	WG	61	8.05
99.	Sentinel Worlds	EA	RP	71	8.04
100.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	ST	39	8.03

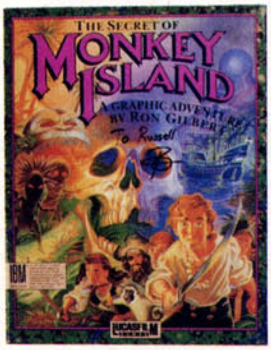
Top Strategy



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Top Wargame

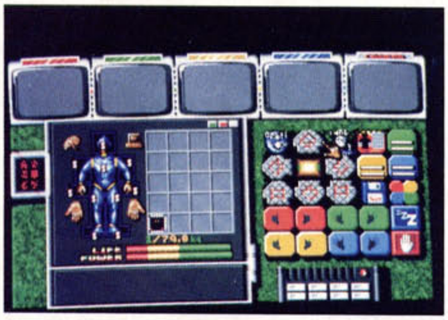




Over There

Dungeon Re-Master

by Paul Rigby



Betrayal



Captive

Yet another *Dungeon Master* look-alike has appeared, this time from **Mindscape** and the fertile brain of veteran programmer Tony Crowther. Called *Captive*, the player, although innocent of the crime for which he is accused, finds himself imprisoned in a cell, under suspended animation, for two hundred years. Then...

"I think it has been two days since I woke up. All I remember is hearing a low hum of machinery and then realizing I could feel myself against the cold metal slab. It took me about three hours to pull some of the tubes and stuff out of me and think about getting up. That was a mistake."

The only way to escape is, surprisingly enough, via the briefcase found handily nearby. Within is a computer, used to control four robots — who happened to respond to the SOS call. Each droid is divided into component parts, enabling a variety of configurations (different types of arms, legs, heads, etc). The four droids then move around together, forming the classic RPG party.

To escape, the player must maneuver the droids through ten bases holding the fortress prison in orbit, destroy the power source in each base and find the spacecraft needed to transport the robots to the next base. Once each base has been shut down, the player must then fly the droids to the central fortress and rescue "himself".

The opposition in *Captive* is varied and imaginative. Dinosaur sea monsters, dragons and mechanical tanks must be fought using the iconic interface. The view window lets you look through the eyes of one of the robots. Above the main view screen are five mini-screens displaying extra information such as seen through remote cameras. Available now for the Amiga, with other 16-bit versions to follow.

The West Marches are ruled by a duopoly. The King and Bishop each has a court filled by courtiers presented by the knights of the land — the player being one of these knights. Courtiers hold great influence as all matters of state are put to a vote in the respective courts. A knight who can accumulate the most courtiers in each court will gain a majority. With this majority comes a chance to seize power and depose both Bishop and King so as to replace them with a suitable puppet ruler. If both courts are so ruled, then that knight is declared the winner. This, then, is the task of the player.

In **Microprose**'s *Betrayal*, four knights battle it out: managing estates, collecting taxes, creating armies, declaring war on a regular basis, spying and other noble acts.

Villages supply taxes, wheat for food, pottery to sell, and militia (for defence and offence). A self-sufficient village is the player's aim; otherwise one must finance it out of one's own pocket. The player will also have to watch out for the fluctuating popularity level which, if it falls below a specified level, will result in rebellion. Strangely, in this game of intrigue, assassinations, treason, economics, etc., combat, which can be toggled on or off, is a simple arcade beat-'em-up, viewed from side-on. To appear on the **Rainbird** label, *Betrayal* should be available on the Amiga, PC and ST as you read this.

In *The Mission*, the player takes the part of a character constantly goaded into undertaking crazy challenges from

(Continued on page 92)

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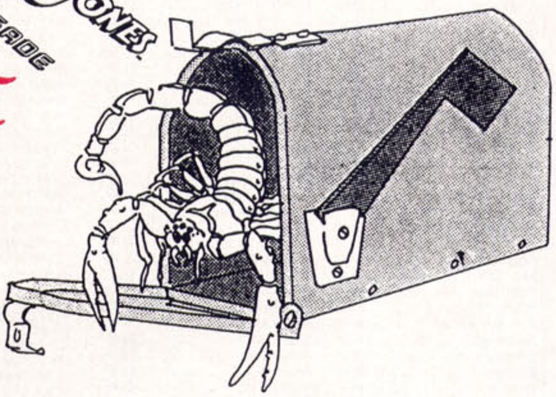
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Scorpion's Mail



Hints For Adventure Games

As Told By Scorpia

Well, it's a good thing Fred and I made some extra room back here. The number of requests for the secret of the *Ultima VI* cheat menu exceeded even my expectations. I have begun to wonder if I should have said anything about knowing it. It seems to have caused a veritable flood into my mailbox (not to mention the back room here, which has suddenly become very crowded).

No matter, I can handle it (I hope!). Meanwhile, let me put in a reminder here to be careful with those SASE's. One reply came back to my box (over two weeks after I sent it!) because the correspondent had used, not a postage stamp, but a Nature Conservancy stamp, on the envelope (oops). And there are still those who forget to enclose a SASE in the first place. You really need to have one if you live in the United States, folks (that is, if you live in the U.S. and want a reply!). With all that said, we can move on to this month's questions.

Ultima V: People continue to have some difficulties with Dungeon Shame. In particular, they can't find the way out of the first room, and they know there has to be more than that. Quite right, there's *definitely* much more. To reach that "much more," you need to be pushy. Axes and arrows aren't going to work in this instance; you'll have to get your own hands dirty. Also, regarding Dungeon Doom: this place is tricky. There's more than one way to various levels, and you can spend a lot of time going in circles. What you really want to find is a room with (among other critters) some sandtraps. When you've reached that, you're on the right path.

Wasteland: Folks are still having problems with obtaining the four special keys needed for the end game at Base Cochise. One can be gotten from the Cyborg Commandos in Las Vegas. The other three can be found in Citadel. You will have to go through Citadel very carefully to get all of them.

Quest for Glory (formerly **Hero's Quest**): Some readers have been having a hard time looking for the secret entrance to the Brigand's fortress. They've been doing all sorts of things in the tavern, thinking that the way is under the trap door. Nope. Wrong. The trap door has nothing to do with it (as any Thief could tell you, hehe). The entrance is in the outdoors, cleverly concealed amongst some rocks. Just be careful you don't get bounced around. Also, for those who have been asking why **Sierra** suddenly changed the name of this series from *Hero's Quest* to *Quest For Glory*, it's simple: *Hero's Quest* (as a game title) had already been snapped up by **Milton Bradley**. To avoid all sorts of problems, **Sierra** thus made a little change in the title of their product.

Wing Commander: I haven't played this one; it's not really my type of game. However, there is one tip about it that I'd like to pass along. Going by the many messages online about *WC* (of nearly universal acclaim, too), it appears that best results are obtained by using an item called the **Kraft** *Thunderstick*. Those who switched from whatever they were using before to this particular joystick found the game much more playable.

Fool's Errand: Of the several really difficult puzzles in the game, one that seems to be driving folks up the wall, is catching the elusive question mark that always bounces away when you get close to it. The secret to success here is obtained in the solution to another puzzle. Remember the points of the compass. Also, when putting together the Sun map, check the tiles against the paragraphs on the scrolls. Most (though not all) tiles will have something on them that relates to a paragraph, and the tiles should be assembled in the same order as the paragraphs on the scrolls, beginning with the Sun tile.

Ultima VI: As I mentioned in my original article on this game several issues ago, it is perfectly all right to take anything you want from Lord British's castle. That includes chests, locked or not, as well as the potions sitting on the table (although I never bothered with potions myself), and items in boxes and barrels. This time around, you don't have to be afraid to snarf anything.

Indiana Jones & The Quest for the Holy Grail: Most people are aware there's a key in Henry Jones' house they have to find. Only they can't find it. Well, the place is such a mess already, a little more won't hurt, right? So you may want to try knocking things around a bit; you never know what you might find.

Neuromancer: Money. Everyone seems to want money. Not surprising, really, since you need plenty of bucks to equip yourself with the very latest in cyber-decks. There are several ways to obtain cash here (admittedly, not very legally). One is to have a chat with a certain Panther Modern, who can be quite helpful in this regard (he can be helpful in other ways, too).

That's about all for this trek into the mailroom. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game (please, no questions about war, strategy, or arcade-type games!), you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie: visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring!

 CGW

On-line Gaming Viewed by a Skeptic

Gemstone III, *for Example*

by Johnny L. Wilson

On-line gaming is simultaneously a hope for better gaming in the future, a significant option for gaming in the present and, sometimes, a throwback to the gaming of the past. In many ways, the strength of the medium are also its weaknesses. The strengths are, of course, sociability and interaction with human players without a requirement of geographical proximity. The weaknesses are based on the fact that a network is required to facilitate that sociability and interaction. This provides for two basic problems. First, within the fee structure of the network, the meter is always running. One doesn't feel the leisure to explore multiple options when it is costing $.10 a minute and up. Second, the display capability of the terminals is limited by the capacity of the modems and telecommunications software. There are plenty of gamers who are willing to participate in on-line games, but are frustrated by the lack of graphic support that current technology allows. Though there are exceptions to this lack of graphic support (*Air Warrior* on **GEnie** and *Club Carib* on **Quantum-Link**) and rumors of similar products for all genres in the future, lack of graphics is still a major limitation of the medium.

Gem in the Rough

Gemstone III by **Simutronics, Inc.** is a good example of some of the best aspects in current on-line games. However, the game also allows us to illustrate some of the worst aspects of on-line games. The best is reflected in its ability to bring "real" people and their "player" personas together and the selection of a very fine role-playing system to handle character generation and the mechanics of combat. The worst is reflected in the archaic text parser structure, awareness of the meter running and fear of the esoteric.

The well-cut facets of *Gemstone III* include the character generation system, extremely well-written prose and capacity, as in **Compuserve**'s *Islands of Kesmai*, to encounter authentically human player characters. The character generation system is licensed from **Iron Crown Enterprises** and is a direct conversion of the *RoleMaster*™ pen and paper game system. It provides for ten different attributes, numbered up to 100 points each. Attributes rarely seen in such games include: Eloquence, Reasoning, Intuition and Empathy. The more typical attributes are present, as well. Each character also has a maximum potential for each attribute that can be earned in the course of adventuring and a statistical bonus or liability based on the current statistic for the attribute. For example, a character with an Agility of 100 would get a bonus of 35 when that attribute is used, but the same character might have an intuition of 22 and hence, take a -6 disparity when that attribute is used.

In addition, one selects race (from a Middle Earth style list), appearance (eyes, hair and complexion) and profession, as well as selecting skills, spells and ranks (skill and spell levels) from a wide menu of options. This is a marvelous way to build a character.

Unfortunately, one wonders why players, especially experienced *Gemstone III* players, would ever go to this much trouble. The opportunity to use such skills seems rather unlikely in the playing of the game. For example, if a player goes to a great effort to create a bard with a high eloquence attribute, it does not seem to help him get a gig singing or telling stories in a tavern. It apparently does not even help him when encountering another character, because he still has to communicate through the text parser. The parser will be considered later.

The prose descriptions in *Gemstone III* are well-scribed, to say the least. The short paragraphs certainly outshine most text games and flesh out the town of Kelfour's Landing (the game's starting point) and environs with vivid images.

Finally, the one facet of most on-line games which keeps bringing people back is the capacity of playing with and against human allies or opponents. *Gemstone III* builds community within **Simutronics** fantasy demesne by offering an on-line newsletter to help players keep up with the latest happenings, a high score list to keep things competitive and on-line messages which indicate

(Continued on page 95)

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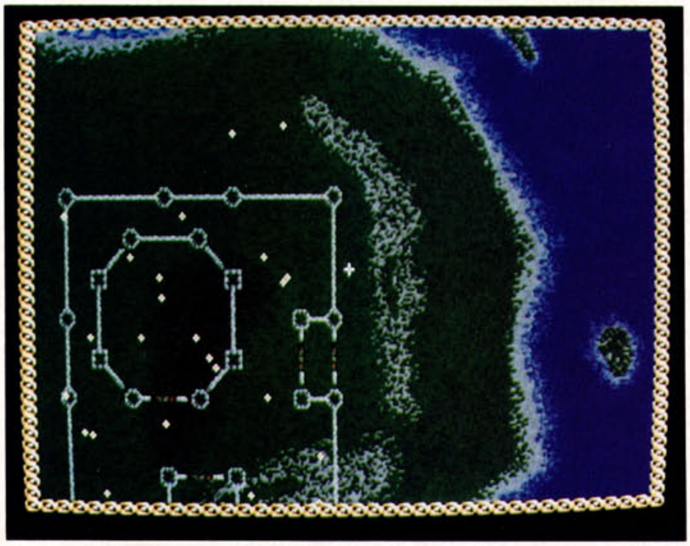
Castling Without Getting Rooked

Interplay's Castles

Castles may best be described as a hybrid between *SimCity* and a strategy game concerned with the chivalry, diplomacy, economics and military science of the feudal era. In fact, if the two simulations were published by the same company, one would be tempted to call it "SimCastle." For example, in the same way that *SimCity* lets players design a city from scratch and nurture it into a metropolis, *Castles* uses a simple layout routine to allow players to design the floorplans from scratch and an on-screen editor to adapt the designs as they come into being.

Also, the interface for *Castles* is very similar to the *SimCity* approach. Like *SimCity*, where one selects an icon, moves it to the map via the cursor and clicks on the spot where the actual road, building, utility, park etc. is to be planted or built, the "design editor" function of *Castles* allows the player to create with its point and click interface. Players select from two types of towers, one type of wall or one type of door and place them on the map. Then, players decide whether to defend these castle features with arrow slits, cauldrons or, in the case of a door/gate, a portcullis. Moats are determined by the program, independently of the player.

The play mechanics themselves are somewhat different, however. In *SimCity*, one keeps making the same kinds of decisions over and over. Then, after the program runs through several evaluation functions for each zone on the map, the reports are updated and the players make the same kinds of "standing" decisions based on new information. In *Castles*, the players make the same kinds of "standing" decisions by calling up decision windows for allocating or hiring labour, purchasing or storing food, deploying military, and raising or lowering taxes. However, *Castles* also features over 200 possible random problems that can arise at unspecified times during the game. These problems must be solved by the player taking on the role of a liege lord and selecting an intelligent option. So, *Castles* functions as both a "software toy," where one uses strategy to build the castle of one's dreams, and as a partial role-playing game in terms of interacting with the artificial personalities of various factions.



Lord's Labour Lost

In addition to designing the castle plan, players will have to manage their resources wisely in four areas of administration: labour, taxes, military and food. Taxes and food are rather straightforward. With regard to taxes, players determine which of three attitudes they will take toward their citizens: generous, normal and tyrannical. Naturally, each of the three states of taxation create their own potential problems. With regard to food, players must determine simply whether they will purchase and store food in preparation for a siege or not. Of course, funds spent on food will mean less resources to spend on the castle itself.

Military actions feature administrative details like transferring troops from one castle or lord to another. However, players will also deploy their men to participate in simple battle sequences depicting the defense of one's castle (actually using those arrow slits and cauldrons) and, assuming the design does not have to be changed, brief sorties against siege towers, ladders, catapults and sapper's tents. The decisions made in terms of military administration will have tremendous impact on this phase of the game.

The area where players will probably spend the most time, however, is in the field of labour. There, players will seek to recruit new labourers and will allocate them into seven different skill areas: masons, carpenters, smiths, diggers, carters, quarrymen, and general labourers. Obviously, one must reach an optimal proportion between each of the skill areas or many of the labourers will end up hurrying up in order to simply wait.

The One Who Would Be King

It is possible that *Castles* would be an excellent program, even if it was only a simulation of the difficulties encountered in building a medieval castle. However, it is also a role-playing game of sorts. Many times in the course of a game, the player will be confronted by a messenger that brings a problem. The player will be offered multiple choices in dealing with the problem and his/her selection will determine how the various factions (feudal lords, church leaders, wizards and/or serfs) respond to his/her leadership.

For example, one message states that the Duke of Warfield has been drawn into battle by a cunning enemy who ambushed him and killed 800 men. The player's choices might include: a) sending 1,000 men to replenish the duke's army; b) replacing the duke with a new leader to avoid a similar debacle in the future; or c) sending both a new leader and 1,000 fresh troops. The final solution may be the best military solution, but demoting the duke is certain to set off new troubles among the nobility.

On another occasion, the player might be confronted by a noble who states that a drunken cleric murdered his brother by placing a knife in his back. As the liege lord of the area, you must decide whether to: a) allow the church to try the case; b) try the case yourself; or c) assure the noble that you will look into the case, but simply forget it and let matters take their course. Naturally, the first choice will get the nobility up in arms, the second will make the church hostile toward the player and the third will get everyone angry at the player.



The prospect of numerous such dilemmas being thrown at the player during the course of the game and each problem potentially impacting the labour pool, income and military strength makes for a challenging game. Indeed, as angry as players often get with the public opinion polls in *SimCity*, we can certainly anticipate some visceral reactions to these "limited win" situations. Also, the handling of dilemmas in this way means that the game should never really get stale. Even when one learns the best way to handle each individual problem, the situation is bound to be different, depending on what order the random problems arrive in.

Brows Bound With Victorious Wreaths

Setting *Castles* more distinctly apart from *SimCity* is the fact that it offers a campaign game. In the campaign game, the player is required to subjugate eight different geographical areas. Subjugation is determined by the liege lord's (player character's) ability to build and maintain a castle in each given area. The plan for the campaign game is built on a Welsh analog.

Naturally, decisions made in one geographical area follow the player from one area to another and the diplomatic juggling of one faction in relation to another, as well as one military power toward another, is more delicate than in the scenarios where players simply build their castles.

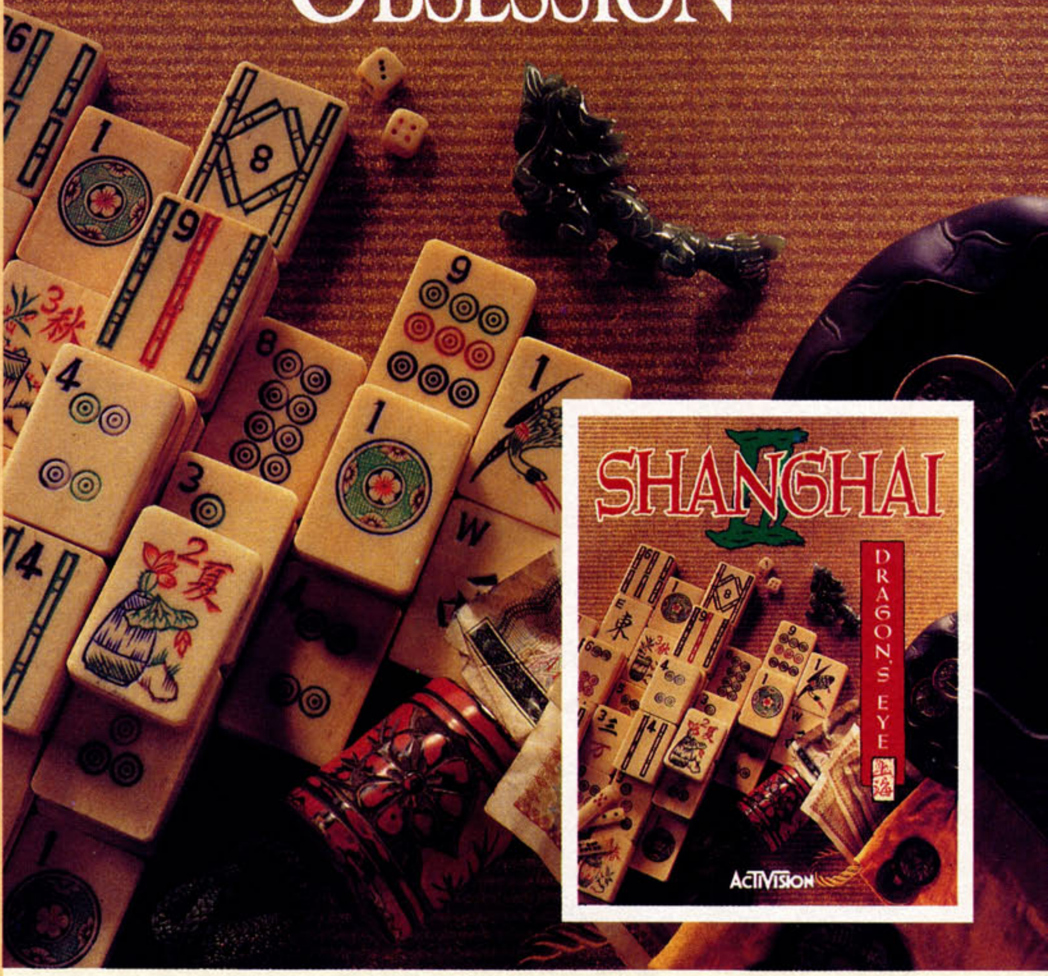
Tapestries

In addition to excellent decisions with regard to interface and game play, *Castles* intends to follow a high standard in atmosphere, as well. **Interplay** has committed to a musical score by the "Fat Man," George Sanger, the composer who rendered Tchaikovsky perfectly for **Lucasfilm**'s *Loom* and penned such great cinematic scores for **Origin**'s *Wing Commander* and *Savage Empire*. Hence, the rich atmospheric texture of medieval music should surround the impressive 256-color VGA graphics which depict the castles and environs themselves.

Long Live The King

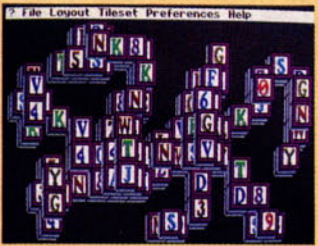
Looking at a game as early as *CGW* has looked at *Castles* means that one cannot render a final verdict or certain recommendation on a game. We are impressed with what the program already does and we are in agreement with the strategic/role-playing elements which are yet to be fully implemented. We hear what designer Scott Bennie means when he says that, "It's no longer enough for a product to be a good simulation or even a good-looking simulation, it has to have that element of game play that makes players get it off the shelf over and over again." **CGW**

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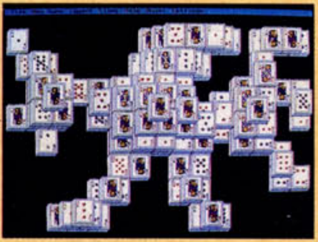




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[This is Dan's tenth published game since 1978. Among his better-known titles are: *Computer Quarterback*, *M.U.L.E.*, *Seven Cities of Gold* and *Modem Wars*].

A Bunker's-Eye View of *Command HQ*

by Dan Bunten

Design Overview

Command HQ is a conquer-the-world game, although not a wargame. It has more in common with the boardgame *Risk!* than with the wargames often highlighted here in *Computer Gaming World*. (Actually its closest ancestor from board games would be *Axis and Allies*, the **Milton Bradley** WWII game with lots of toy soldiers, ships and planes inside). The working title of *CHQ* was *War Room*. Thus, *CHQ* simulates the command options at the highest level where deploying armies, fleets and air wings is the detailed level. Player interactions in *CHQ* primarily focus on buying and transferring units, with movement and combat taking place automatically.

Appropriate to such a simulation, there is limited intelligence concerning the enemy. Only enemy units within a "scanning range" of your units are "seen." (Depending on the war being simulated, planes and satellites may add to your reconnaissance ability.) Also, as in the real world, *CHQ* has no "turns." The game runs instead on "modified real-time." When there is little action, time passes quickly and, when the battles heat up, the speed conveniently slows. In addition, players can adjust the overall speed of the game to suit their style—from strategically slow to almost arcade-like fast. *CHQ* offers a modem/serial option for the 2-player game. Thus, even when playing against another human the "limited intelligence" and "real-time action" features are still maintained.

In the design of *CHQ*, I tried to make the interaction of the world and units intuitive. For instance, tanks are better on the attack, infantry are better on defense, jungles slow movement more than forest or mountains do, mountains and cities are easier to defend, and deserts and polar regions cause higher attrition. These kinds of "obvious" interactions make *CHQ* playable without the need to know the specific numbers the game uses in its programming. Thus, for this reason, and in keeping with the normal way **Microprose** writes game manuals, we left out the raw values that create the "model." However, since *Computer Gaming World* readers have an appetite for such figures and the sophistication to handle them, here are some numeric details on the *CHQ* model.

Getting There From Here

The *CHQ* world map/game "board" is based on a Mercator projection map with a resolution of 320 squares by 136 squares covering the latitudes from approximately 75 degrees north to 55 degrees south. The world "wraps" around horizontally. Terrain affects the game by modifying movement and combat, and by causing attrition.

It is important to visualize that units technically take up only one square, while their icons occupy a three- by three-square grid (the same size as cities and bases). Some actual values used for each of these factors are shown in tables 1 and 2.

During combat, units lose movement steps for the amount of damage they suffer and inflict (representing time engaged in combat). For infantry units, this loss is equal to their total damage suffered/inflicted, and for armor the loss is half the damage impact. This effect can reduce the steps to a deficit of up to -25 (when these steps are negative, that is when the unit becomes "pinned").

When not moving, a land unit's accumulation of steps is reset to zero while a ship's value returns to its basic steps-available-per-round (thus ships are quick to make an initial move while land units wait to build up movement steps).

The way to get units "unpinned" is with the "new orders bonus" built into the game. This means that if an already moving unit is given a command to move and its step accumulator is less than 150% of its per-round rating, that accumulator is increased

Table 1: Movement Steps Available per Round by Unit Type

Infantry	12	Submarine	40
Armor	24	Cruiser	40
Transport	36	Carrier	40

Notes: Units automatically "save" leftover steps as they are moving (see the terrain costs on **Table 2**, below). Land units move only once per round, while sea units may move as many times as their accumulated steps will allow when they are outside the range of enemy units (usually twice per round).

Table 2: Other Terrain Effects

Terrain	Move	Attrit.	Dig In	Repair
Ocean	20	0	n/a	n/a
Dock	20	20*	yes	L/S
Lake	20	3	n/a	n/a
Capital	20	20*	yes	L
Base	20	20*	yes	L
City	20	20*	yes	L
Resource	20	0	yes	L
Plain	20	0	yes	n/a
Forest	30	0	yes	n/a
Mountain	40	0	yes	n/a
Desert	20	3	yes	n/a
Jungle	60	3	yes	n/a
Polar	50	5	no	n/a
Wasteland	50	31	no	n/a

Move = The number of movement "steps" used by a unit to leave each type of terrain.

Attrit. = Attrition causes a unit to suffer damage in certain terrains. "Resistance" attrition (marked with an *) is similar to an attack by an enemy unit (i.e., it can destroy the moving unit). In neutral sites, the factor is 20 points of damage. For enemy-held sites the factor is only 2 points of damage. "Basic" attrition (i.e., "environmental" attrition) happens regardless of ownership, but unlike resistance attrition cannot lower a unit's strength below 20 strength points.

Dig In = Those lines marked with a "yes" mean that infantry units can dig in (entrench) in that terrain type if they are not moving or engaged in combat.

Repair = Ships can repair where an "S" appears, and land where an "L" is indicated. The facility must be friendly and the repairing units cannot be moving or engaged in combat for repairs to occur. All units repair at the rate of 10 strength points every other round *up to their maximum of 100 strength points.*

Table 3: Units and Their Ranges

	Firing Range Land	Trans.	Ships	Scan Range
Land Units	2	2	1	5
Transports	2	2	1	3
Submarines	n/a	2	2	4*
Cruisers	3	3	3	5*
Carriers	4	4	4	6*
Airplanes	15**	15**	15**	15***
Recon Sat.	n/a	n/a	n/a	20

Notes: * = Submarine scan range is reduced to 3 if the target is not moving. A sub can only be spotted at a range of 1 when it is either stationary or if the scanning unit is moving (regardless of spotting unit's normal range).

** = Airplanes don't automatically fire. Instead, they wait to receive missions.

*** = Airplane range also depends on the scenario chosen: 15 for 1986 and 2023, and 10 for 1942 and ????.

A visual aid for ranges: 1 square range must be envisioned as "deep overlapping," 2 squares as "slightly overlapping," 3 squares as "touching," and 6 squares as "a full unit away."

by a 50% bonus (the old "keep kicking them in the butt" approach to leadership).

Global Warfare As Scissors, Rock, Paper

There are 6 basic unit types that occupy space and interact in the world. Although *CHQ* is a very high-level strategic simulation, these unit types have very distinct features. There are two kinds of land units: infantry and tanks. Tanks move twice as fast as infantry, cost twice as much and are better at conducting a land offensive. Infantry "digs in" when not moving or engaged in combat and, once entrenched, is less vulnerable to land and sea attacks. Also, infantry is the unit type of choice to "hit the beaches" in an invasion (see table 4).

When land units are moved to sea they instantly and automatically become "transports" and move like ships. Ship types include these transports, submarines, cruisers and carriers. Transports can be easily killed by any other ship but are the only ships that can mount amphibious attacks against land units, cities and bases. Subs are hard to spot and do major damage at close range. Cruisers have a moderate range. Cruisers can also bombard shore units, are good against carriers in head-to-head combat and are better than carriers against subs. Carriers are twice as expensive as subs and cruisers, have a wider range than cruisers (although they do a little less damage) and they can carry an airplane unit. These airplane units have a *very* large range, can do *major* damage to other units, can bomb cities or oilfields, can transfer or airdrop infantry, and can also dogfight other planes.

The World At War

There are 5 scenarios in *CHQ*, covering real as well as imaginary World Wars. Some brief annotations follow.

1918 (WWI): This scenario has only cruisers, subs and infantry. There are only a few cities compared to the other scenarios, but they generate income for buying units. The side who owns London, Paris and Berlin wins.

1942 (WWII): Infantry, armor, subs, cruisers, carriers and planes are available during this era. Income is generated by cities but no oil is used. The side who owns Washington, London, Berlin, Moscow and Tokyo (i.e., *all* the capitals) wins.

1986 (WWIII): This selection postulates a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It includes all the units of 1942 unit types plus recon satellites, killer satellites (for killing recon satellites), nukes, foreign aid (with which to "buy" allies) and intel scans (to "spy" on the enemy during the "Cold War" or cease-fire periods). Custom layouts of forces can also be created for this war and saved to disk (which adds considerably to the value of intel scans). The game starts in "Cold War" mode with a timer that indicates how long the players must make chess-like purchase and maneuvering decisions before hostilities may begin. Cease-fires may also be declared if both sides agree, leading to another couple of minutes of cold war. To win, one side must own Washington, London, Moscow and Tokyo (note that all these capitals are protected by ABM systems so they can't be nuked). For this scenario (and the following ones), oil fields supply the energy needed for cities to create income and for units to move.

2023 (WWIV): This scenario has the same features as "1986" except the capitals are moved to random cities and the alliances are scrambled (at least as viewed from the world of today — but who knows about the world of tomorrow?). Each player starts with 600 billion dollars, very few cities and resources, no units and 5 minutes of intense cold war maneuvering before fighting can begin.

???? (WWV): Battling it out under these parameters postulates an "after the holocaust" war of growing empires led by the player's "city-states." All cities, bases and oil fields are in random locations across the globe and the opposing capital is hidden. The units included are the same as in 1942 but, unlike that scenario, oil is needed to generate city income and move units. To win, one must find and capture the opposing capital. Many people have compared this scenario to the situation presented in the **Interstel** game *Empire*.

The Right Tools For The Job

Units must "see" the enemy unit before they can fire at it. Thus, units have a scanning range and a firing range (see table 3). In general, a unit scans for enemy units each round and spots all units within its scanning range (except for submarines, which have special rules as noted below).

If there is an enemy unit within firing range, the unit then selects the nearest target, turns towards it and shoots. (Facings are limited to north, south, east or west with diagonal unit contact going either east or west, as appropriate). After firing, units spend a round preparing to fire again (i.e., units fire every *other* round). (*Important note: a "round" is defined as the time it takes for every unit in the game to have a chance to move, scan, etc.*)

Stationary units that aren't engaged in combat are ready to fire when a target approaches them. Moving units have a 50% chance of being ready to fire the first shot, thereafter firing normally every other round. If there are multiple targets at an equal distance, the computer picks randomly between them if it is

Table 4: Damage Points Inflicted by Attacker on Defender

Defender ▶ / Attacker ▼	Inf	Arm	Dug-In Inf	Trans	Sub	Cruis	Carrier
Infantry	20	17	15	25	35	35	35
Armor	26	20	20	25	35	35	35
Infantry Transport	18	16	14	10	5	5	5
Armor Transport	9	8	7	10	5	5	5
Submarine	0	0	0	100	25	34	34
Cruiser	12	10	6	50	34	25	34
Carrier	10	8	5	50	25	20	25
Airplanes	50%	50%	50%	34	34	25	25

Note that airplanes do a percentage of damage to a land unit's *remaining* strength, and a fixed amount of damage to units (including land units/transports) which are at sea.

Airplane Fast Facts

Scan and Mission/Transfer Range by Scenario

1942, ????	10/70
1986, 2023	15/100

"Downtime" Schedule

After a mission	8 turns
After defense (within 9 spaces)	+4 turns
After aborted mission due to "no fuel"	2 turns

Other Facts

Attrition rate to airdropped infantry =	20%
Attrition rate to bombed land unit =	50%
Damage points inflicted on cruisers and carriers =	25
Damage points inflicted on transports and subs =	34

Damage to city when bombed = 250 million + 5 turns delay
Damage to oil when bombed = 1000 units (5 turns production)

Example of Combat "By the Numbers:"

An entrenched infantry unit is defending a city from an attacking infantry unit (which happens to be located in an adjacent mountain), and a tank attacking as a transport (although hitting the defending unit in the flank, the transport, being a sea unit with a blue background, receives no flanking bonus). Here's how the losses would be calculated for each unit during a round in which it fires:

The attacking infantry unit's damage to the defender =
15 points (table 4) x 2/3 (table 5) or 10 points of damage

The attacking tank's damage to the defender =
7 points (table 4) x 2/3 (table 5) or 4 points of damage.

The defending unit's damage to the attacking infantry unit =
20 points (table 4) x 3/4 (table 5) or 15 points

Net results: The defending infantry unit takes 14 (10 + 4) points of damage, the attacking infantry unit takes 15 points of damage, and the attacking tank is unscathed. (*Important lesson:* don't invade from the sea with tanks).

the unit's first shot, and then stays engaged with that chosen enemy unit until it is either destroyed or another enemy unit gets closer. In *CHQ*, shots cause damage which reduce the unit's strength from its potential full-strength value of 100 strength points. When the strength is reduced to zero or less, the unit is destroyed. The amount of damage done by a particular attack depends on the attacking and defending unit types (see table 4), the defender's terrain (see table 5) and whatever additional combat rules might apply in a given situation.

Another combat rule is called "bombardment" and applies when cruisers or carriers are attacking land units from greater than one space distant. Losses from bombardment will cease, however, if the targeted land unit's strength is below 30. (If the ship closes in adjacent to the land unit it may reduce it to below 30 strength points, but the ship will be vulnerable to deadly return fire by the defender's shore batteries at that close a range; see table 4).

Submarine Surprises

Submarines have a number of special rules. First of all, they can't be spotted by satellites or airplanes. If a sub is *not* moving or the scanning ship *is*, the sub can only be spotted from an adjacent square. If the scanning ship is stationary, *then* it can spot *moving* subs up to 3 squares away. Once a sub is spotted it will remain "seen" at the normal range of the scanning ships (e.g., 6 for carriers and 5 for cruisers). Subs can spot moving ships at a range of 4 and stationary ships at a range of 3. Thus, stationary subs are almost invisible until they attack. However, once they attack they are immediately spotted.

Airplanes are another unit type with special rules. Like other units, they automatically scan when "available" and their range of 15 rivals satellites (whose range is 20). Unlike other units, however, they don't automatically attack. You have to designate a mission for them. The range for strike missions, infantry paratroop drops, infantry transfers and bombing runs is 15. For plane transfers to friendly cities or carriers the range is 100. (For scenarios other than 1986 & 2023, these two ranges are reduced to 10 and 70, respectively).

Death From Above

Infantry units which air drop automatically lose 20% of their current strength. Air drops may not be made onto cities or water. Air attacks on enemy land units take 50% of the land unit's remaining strength (planes can kill land units but it takes *at least* 6 attacks, so the point of diminishing returns quickly becomes apparent). Against cruisers and carriers, planes reduce the defender by a fixed 25 points of damage, and against subs and transports that number is increased to 34 points.

Bombing cities reduces the enemy money by 250 million and adds 5 rounds to the time before that site can be used to produce a new unit. Bombing oil fields takes 1000 units of oil. (In other words, bombing either target will cause it to lose five rounds worth of value). After a mission, an attacking plane is unavailable for 8 rounds. Any planes that were used for defense (this happens automatically if the attack was within 9 spaces of a defending airplane) will be unavailable for 4 (additional) rounds. During its unavailable time, a plane cannot scan for enemy units (thus "seen" units may disappear). Note that airplane ranges are calculated as a *radius* in a circle from the square they are located on, not as a large square "box." The radius lines shown on the map are correct.

Table 5: Reduction of Damage Modifier for Defender's Terrain Type

Terrain	Defender	Reduction
City*	Infantry	1/3
City*	Tanks	1/5
Mountain	Infantry	1/4
Mountain	Tanks	1/6

*Notes: * = Includes cities, bases and capitals.*

Flanking applies when there is combat between units on land. Land units hit from the side get 1.5 times the normal damage done to them while those shot from behind get double the normal amount. Another condition of this rule is that only units which are currently engaged with an enemy unit can be flanked. Thus, in a battle between two individual enemy units, neither side can get a flanking bonus.

Fighter Chances

Planes do not always complete their attack missions (transfers with or without infantry never fail). Success depends on the nearness of enemy planes to the target and whether the nearest enemy plane is available or not. From 10% to 75% of missions fail (depending on the distance from the enemy plane and its availability). *If the target is on top of or next to an enemy plane a dogfight ensues.* If the enemy plane is unavailable there is a 25% chance of completing the mission, 40% chance the mission fails, 10% the friendly plane is shot down and 25% the enemy plane is shot down. If the enemy plane is available, there is a 50% chance the attacking mission will fail, 25% the attacker will be shot down and 25% the defender will be shot down. All of this can be seen on table 6, below.

If target is 2 or more spaces from a defending enemy plane the probability of failure ranges from 10% to 50% for land tar-

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gets (and from 20% to 60% for ship targets), depending on the distance from defending planes. At a distance of 9 spaces or greater from a defending airplane, no defending airplane is engaged but the mission still has a minimal chance of failure (10% for land, 20% for sea).

Once these "non-dogfight" missions are determined failures, 66% of the failures result in a "failed mission" where the mission is aborted without loss or damage, and the other 34% results in a plane being shot down. If a defender is engaged (i.e., the battle is within 9 spaces of a defending airplane), half the time it will be the one lost. If there is no defender, then the mission plane is always lost.

Example one: an airstrike is launched against an enemy ship at sea which has no air cover. There is an 80% chance for success, a 14% chance for an aborted mission, and a 6% chance the attacking plane will be destroyed.

Example two: an airstrike is launched against that same enemy ship, only this time there is air cover for it at fairly close (3 spaces) range (not close enough to dogfight). Now the probabilities are a 40% chance for success, a 40% chance for an aborted mission, a 10% chance to destroy the defending airplane, and a 10% chance to destroy the attacking airplane.

Example three: The same attack, only this time the defending air unit is at extreme (8 spaces) air cover range. Now the probabilities are a 70% chance for success, 20% chance for an aborted mission, a 5% chance to destroy the defending airplane, and a 5% chance to destroy the attacking airplane.

Note that in each of the last two examples, when the attacking plane is destroyed, the mission fails, and when the defending plane is destroyed, the mission succeeds.

Table 6: DOGFIGHT TABLE

Enemy Plane Is:	Available	Unavailable
Mission Completed	00%	25%
Mission Completed/ Enemy Air Destroyed	25%	25%
Mission Fails	50%	40%
Mission Fails/ Friendly Air Destroyed	25%	10%

(Defending plane is 0-1 space away from target)

Oil's Well That Ends Well

As mentioned previously, a successful airstrike against an enemy oil resource will cost him 1000 units of oil. The question is, how far does a unit of oil go? Table 7, below, should answer some of these questions. Know that each oil resource produces 200 units of oil per round, and that one's reserve can hold a maximum of 10,000 units.

Of Nukes, Satellites and Foreign Aid

These are special purchase options available in the 1986 and 2023 scenarios only. Nukes have some serious consequences in the game. Besides leaving a nasty wasteland in which no unit can survive (although oceans are unaffected), alliances shift and even once-friendly units can turn hostile. Eventually, if enough nukes are used, a nuclear winter will ensue and the game will be aborted. The probability of nuclear winter starts at 50% for the 10th nuke and increases to 100% at the 20th. There is no such thing as "safely nuking," with the consequences in lost allies and units switching sides going up significantly as each of the following cases is true:

- this is the first nuke used in the war,
- a city was destroyed
- the destroyed city was at one time the player's ally
- no enemy units were killed.

The actual probability is difficult to calculate because the program is very iterative at this level but, suffice it to say, don't drop the first nuke of the game on a friendly city unless you want to fight without friends! Only your home country and units stationed there are free from the "political fall-out."

Recon satellites offer a good way to spot enemy forces. They have a scanning range of 20, which is the best in the game. They can also be moved, but use up their fuel and might fall from orbit if overly maneuvered. They move 8 "world" (as opposed to "satellite map") spaces towards their destination per round. Killer satellites move twice as fast and, when they hit their destination, they destroy all satellites within 8 "world" spaces. Satellites are launched with 255 units of fuel, which are consumed at the rate of 2 per "world" square moved. Thus, they can make slightly over one trip around the globe before crashing. They expend no fuel to remain in place.

Foreign aid is the way to gain voluntary allies (unlike conquest). If a country is neutral, giving as much aid as there are cities in that country will sway them to your side. In some cases, a country may look neutral but is tending towards one side or the other. Mexico in 1986 is tending towards NATO, so the Warsaw player must invest twice to seduce such a country. Conquering a city in a country makes that country tend away from the invader. If a large neutral country like the U.S.A. in 2023 is attacked by one side, the other side should only need spend a single aid to make the country an ally. However, *armies can block aid.* Land units within 4 spaces of a city during cold war or 10 spaces during active war block enemy foreign aid and its adverse effects.

Bugs And Piracy

As far as I know there are no major bugs in the released version of the game. There has been some confusion about video modes supported by the product. *CHQ* requires an EGA, VGA or Tandy to work. However, there is a pre-release version of the game that has been pirated, and that version has some serious flaws. I suppose that ranting about how piracy deprives me and my partner of a return on our 3 man-years of work will only convince those mature enough and ethical enough to have already decided not to pirate software. (Contrary to popular opinion we are not getting rich off our royalties.) However, the player may not know that pirating software hurts him, too. The industry responds to sales figures and if a particular program gets widely pirated with the consequence of poor sales, the publisher will assume it was not a good type of product to make more of. Thus, less or, at least, no more of that type of game will show up on the market in the future. I have personally witnessed a case of this with my game *M.U.L.E.* back in 1984 (the heyday of Atari and the C-64). *M.U.L.E.* sold about 30,000 copies (not good sales) but was very widely distributed by pirates. The result was that publishers believe there is no market for 4-player strategy games. If you get a pirated game, try it out and see if you like it. If you do then vote with your wallet. (In the case of *CHQ*, if you get a pirated copy and like it, buy one to avoid the bugs!) I'd love to hear from you about what you liked or didn't like in *CHQ*, suggestions for further products or even challenges to play a modem game. (I appreciate all mail even though I'm awful about answering it). Contact me at: Dan Bunten, Ozark Softscape, P.O. Box 1845, Little Rock, AR 72203.

CGW

Table 7: OIL CONSUMPTION RATES

Capitals	200 per round	Airplanes	20 per round
Each City	50 per round	All Moving Units	5 to initiate movement
Each Base	None	Moving Land Units	1 per movement step
Each Unit	2 per round*		

* = This cost is spent for maintenance "just to exist."

Some of the information on this table contradicts what the documentation might imply, but be aware that these are the actual numbers that the program uses!

Scorpion's Tale

Sierra's Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire

Scorpia Recounts a New "Quest for Glory"

Well, here we are, starting off a new year of gaming. Fred and I hope that Santa brought you all the games you wanted (and none of the ones you didn't want!) for Christmas. There certainly were a lot of releases this season; getting through them all was a pretty heroic task...and speaking of heroic...

So, ya wanna be even more of a hero, eh? You just didn't have enough back in good old Spielburg, huh? Fighting nasty critters, rescuing maidens in distress, putting brigands out of business, suffering through bad jokes...all that simply whet your appetite for more, is that it?

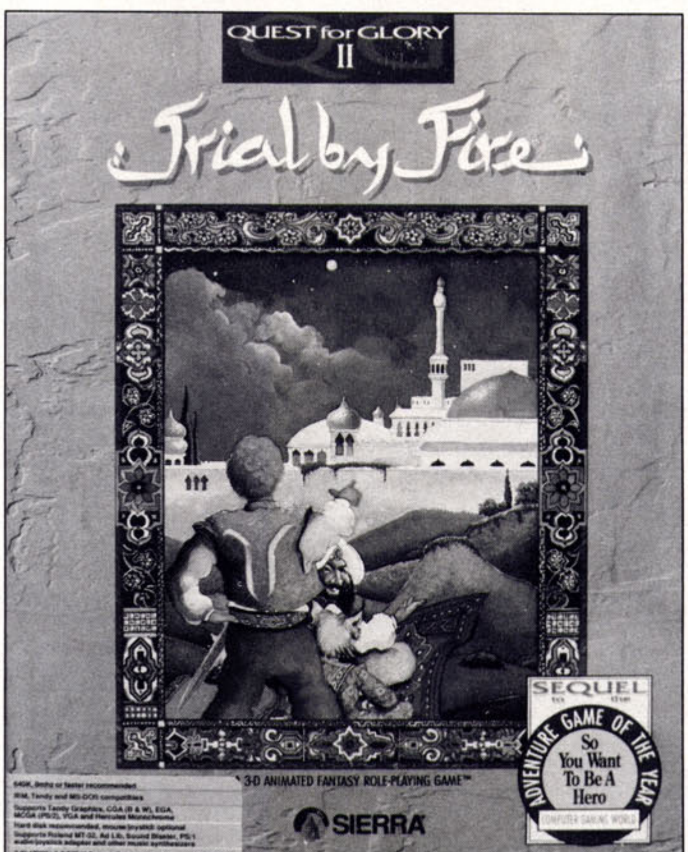
Fine! More is what you'll get. This time, you get to save two cities, fight even nastier critters, put a really mean bad guy out of business, and suffer through worse jokes than ever. Still wanna be a hero? Okay, but don't say I didn't warn you!

Quest For Glory II: Trial by Fire, Corey and Lori Cole's sequel to *Quest For Glory* (formerly *Hero's Quest: So You Wanna' Be A Hero*) picks up just after the previous game left off: with you, Abdullah, and your Katta friends floating off via Magic Carpet Airlines to the land of Shapeir. You're in Shapeir now, and that's where the game actually begins.

If you played the former *Hero's Quest* and eventual *Quest For Glory*, you can bring your saved character into this one. *However*, be advised that the early version of *QFG II* reads all transferred characters as fighters, regardless of their profession in the first game. So check carefully after you import him to the second game. If he shows up as a fighter, but is supposed to be a mage or thief, call Sierra immediately for assistance.

If you didn't play *Quest For Glory* (or didn't save your character), you can create a brand-new character. As noted above, you can have a fighter, thief, or mage. You can also create hybrid characters, such as fighter/mage or mage/thief, but it's more fun to play through as a pure character class.

The main reason for that is the game functions somewhat differently, depending on what profession you choose. Some things will show up *only* for a particular type of character and some puzzles will appear only for a particular type of character. There are several puzzles, however, that all will face, but which will be solved differently, according to profession.



QFG II uses pretty much the same interface as the previous game, but there is one big difference: combat. The rather cumbersome system used by *QFG I* has been scrapped. Combat is now much like it was when you trained with the swordmaster: full screen and full character.

This allows a lot more freedom of action and options, especially if you're a fighter type. You can also set the arcade difficulty to Easy, Normal, or Hard, and, of course, you always have the option of running away if things start to look bad.

All right, so here you are in Shapeir (that is the name of both the land and a city; in this article, Shapeir will refer to the city unless noted otherwise). The Kattas have already set up their Inn (fast workers!) and you can stay there without charge, for as long as you like. Good people, the Kattas.

The first thing you need to do is get your money changed. The gold you brought from Spielburg isn't accepted by anyone but the moneychanger, who will give you dinars for it. Then, buy a map and compass from Alichila. There is a hardcopy map that comes with the game, but it's a little confusing trying to figure out where you are by using *that* map. The one from Ali is much more helpful.

It's a magical map that shows *all* of the city, including places you have visited at least once. So, to get from, say, the Gates Plaza to the Fighter's Hall, you just click on the Hall and poof, there you are. Of course, you do have to find these places on your own the first time around.

Now, you can take the time out to explore, talk to people (ask everyone about everything you can), sign in at the fighter's hall, and maybe, buy a souvenir or two. If you're a thief, locating the Thieves Guild will naturally be high on your list of things to do. Mages will, of course, be looking for the Mage Guild (Hint: have all the spells you possibly can before looking for this place).

The pace of the first few days or so will be rather leisurely. Don't look for too much to be happening. This is where you build up your skills for the tough times ahead, so make good use of this free period. Visit the Fighter's Guild Hall and train up, even if you *aren't* a fighter. The workouts will give you increases in fighting ability, as well as raise your stats. Having some extra strength or agility never hurt anyone and it might save your life someday.

Money is a consideration, too. There are some things you need to buy, and you


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could find yourself running a little short. Check out the notices at the Fighter's Hall for cash-generating assignments (mostly for mages and fighters, since thieves have their own little ways of making money). Beating up on brigands in the desert can also put a few dinars in your pocket.

Sooner or later, you'll start hearing about elementals. Naturally, this is because the town is about to be invaded by them and it's going to be your job to stop 'em. Of course, it helps to know how, so the wise hero will ask around in the right places to pick up this valuable information.

All four elementals must be captured, not killed. So, aside from finding out everything you can about their natures (and weaknesses), you also need a suitable container for each one. Three of these you can buy outright, but the fourth one is another matter. How you obtain it will depend on your character class, but don't take too long; the air elemental shows up soon after the fire elemental (the first) is captured.

One neat feature is public adulation. Every time you succeed with an elemental, the word gets around pretty quickly, especially among the Katta merchants. Make a tour of the plazas and enjoy the praises of the merchants. See, there are some rewards for being a hero!

In between these little rescue jobs, you can wander around in the desert. It's mostly a boring expanse of sand, sand, and more sand, but there are a few interesting things to be found in the arid wastes. Just watch your step and be certain you have plenty of water.

Transportation is helpful, too. There are no horses in the land of Shapeir. Instead, everyone rides the Saurus (something along the lines of a reptilian kangaroo). Is buying a Saurus a good idea? You bet your life (hohoho) it is!

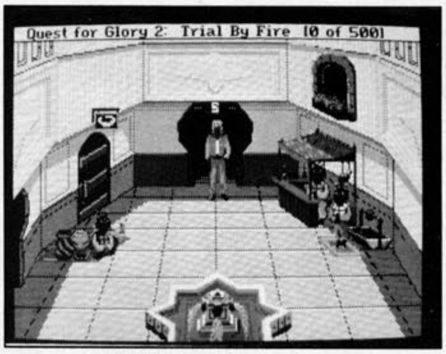
The only problem with your Saurus is that it isn't quite so brave as the manual says. Expect your faithful mount to take off at the first sign of trouble. However, if you can't find him afterwards, not to worry. He'll show up back at the corral sooner or later.

By now, you're probably wondering just what the game is all about. Well, if you've been talking to people (and reading the manual!), that's pretty obvious. Things are not good in Raseir, the sister-city of Shapeir. First, the Emir has vanished and no one knows what happened to him. Second, Raseir itself has deteriorated since then, as witnessed by the refugees and rumors which have been pouring into Shapeir for a year now. The Sultan's army was turned back by a magical sandstorm. Even the top mages of Shapeir have been unable to penetrate the darkness that lies over the city.

So, you're just gonna have to make a trip to Raseir to set things right. It's not a trip you can make alone, though. In fact, you'll have to wait for the caravan to arrive on day 17. It's the only way to cross the desert safely. That's plenty of time for you to save Shapeir from the elementals and get a few other things accomplished, too. Just remember, everything has to be done before the morning of Day 17. After that, you're on your way and there's no going back.

Does that sound ominous? Just wait until you get to Raseir and you'll learn about ominous. It's not like Shapeir. There are no merchants in the Plazas, no shops open, and no one on the streets except guards. The whole town looks pretty slummy. In fact, half the town has been blocked off (no, you can't get past any of the barricades). Oh, and your magic map doesn't work here, so you have to get around the hard way.

Time will hang a little heavy on your hands, unless maybe you're a thief. There isn't much to do or see in the city, especially on the day you arrive. Signor Ferrari at the Blue Parrot provides (shabby) accommodations, but these are available only at night. Since there's a curfew, it's wise to be indoors after sunset.



The next day, you can watch Ugarte (an information peddler and sometimes water smuggler) get arrested by the guards. There really isn't much you can do about this except look on. Sorry about that, but even a hero of your stature can't help everyone.

However, you'll soon have the opportunity to help someone else, and my advice is to take it. Otherwise, you might have some problems later. Speaking of problems, events start to move quickly on the third day, when you're arrested and tossed into the dungeon.

Naturally you (and your Katta friend Sharaf) will escape (if you don't waste too much time). How depends on your character class again; the methods are pretty obvious.

Unfortunately, as you make your way through the alleys, you run into someone else who doesn't exactly have your best interests at heart (presuming he even has one, a matter that is in grave doubt). On the other hand, at least it gets you into that fabled Forbidden City you've been hearing about.

Now, the first thing is to get that crypt door open. Your "friend" is pretty impatient, so don't keep him waiting. It's simply a matter of throwing a little light on the subject, after all.

Then it's through the caves we (or at least you) go. Cross the stream (step lively!) and then move up to the next level...providing you do something about the wind (no, the air elemental is no help here). Try holing up, that might help.

There isn't much you can do about the lava room except not to dally and to watch where you walk. Move fast enough and you'll come through it in relatively good shape.

All you need now is the name of power to open the door. You should know what it is (if you don't, you weren't paying enough attention to the prophecy, for shame, for shame!).

Okay, your little mission is just about over. In fact, it is over, as your "good buddy" pops in, grabs the idol, and leaves you behind to die a slow death. Hey, isn't that what friends are for?

Never fear, there *is* a way out. Just walk around a bit. After a little chat with the Djinn, it's time for the big showdown. Before you know it, you're back in Raseir, just outside the palace (a good place to save, just in case).

How you get in will, again, depend on your profession. Mages and thieves can take the detour; fighters go right down the middle, so to speak. Whichever, it won't be long before you're at the climax. *Do not* waste time here; once all the candles are lit, the demon Iblis will be released and you don't want that to happen (after all, it ends the game, and not pleasantly!).

Whew! That was cutting it close, but heroes are supposed to live on the edge anyway, right? Now, you can sit back and enjoy the grand finale. And what a finale it is! It is very elaborate, and certainly one of the better game endings anywhere.

In terms of difficulty, this one is about on a par with the previous game, maybe slightly harder in some respects. In terms of humor, well, just grit your teeth, friends, because the bad jokes and puns are everywhere, and they are bad! Don't say I didn't warn you. And on that note, A River Dirty, Gertie, until next issue!

In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game or a bad pun, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi, visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu). On GEnie, stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT). By US Mail (you *must* enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CGW**

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Battlefield

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- A full map plus 3 regional maps.
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- Not copy protected.



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Questions:

1) Genghis Khan's greatest claim to fame was?
(a) a quick temper (b) the hit single "I feel for you!" (c) a bad smell (d) carving out an empire stretching from China to Europe in the 12th century

2) What famous gang defeated the evil minister Gao Qiu and restored peace to the Song Empire?
(a) Hole in the Wall Gang (b) Bandit Kings of Ancient China (c) Gang of Four

3) What was the epic describing the power struggle at the end of China's second Han Dynasty called?
(a) Romance of the Three Kingdoms (b) I Ching (c) Godzilla

4) Who terrorized and almost succeeded in unifying Japan in the 16th Century?
(a) Cowabunga (b) Nobunaga Oda (c) Godzilla

5) What type of game does KOEI make?
(a) simulation (b) historical (c) educational (d) entertaining (e) all of the above (f) none of the above

6) "KOEI, We __________ the past, you make the __________ !"
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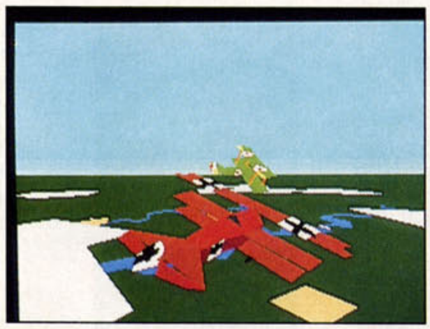
Jousting over Germany

Microprose's Knights of the Sky

by Russell Sipe

All right, all you jet jockeys. If vertical acceleration is your thing, if being in the midst of the fray from the 'get go' turns you on, if you feel the need, the need for speed...you'd better look elsewhere.

On the other hand, if you really want to experience what WWI combat felt like, you're going to want to take *Knights of the Sky* (*KOTS*) up for a spin (and a spin is just what you may find yourself in if you face the Red Baron himself before you are ready).





For several years now, we at *CGW* have wanted to see a good WWI air combat game. We were pleased when four games were announced last year (*Wings*, *Blue Max*, *Knights of the Sky*, and *Red Baron*). We were disappointed when three of the four games were delayed. Now, as of this writing, all but *Red Baron* have been released and we are told *it* will be out by the time this issue hits the printing press.

Wings (see our review in *CGW* #77) is just what you would expect from **Cinemaware**, a graphically rich cinematic style game which puts more emphasis on arcade gaming than on serious history. Our review said "while some serious pilots will dismiss this program as merely an overly streamlined flight simulator, *Wings* is really a whopping good arcade experience."

Blue Max was reviewed in *CGW* #78. Our review stated "*Blue Max* strives to give one a feel for WWI dogfighting; accuracy is sacrificed to gameplay. The aircraft are simply overpowered for their historical period...however, the game was designed for the general market; gamers who are more into 'game' than 'simulation' should find *Blue Max* enjoyable."

Red Baron was sneak previewed in *CGW* #75 (October 1990). At the time, **Dynamix** was touting a pre-Christmas release. By the time you read this, we will know if they hit their target. In our sneak preview we said, "Dynamix has three goals in mind with *Red Baron*: get the flight dynamics right; make sure the dogfighting is realistic; and get the historical color right (i.e., get the famous aces to perform as they did in real life)." Our sneak preview was based upon a version that had most of the flight dynamics 'up and running' realistically, and the dogfighting in place. However, the strategic (almost roleplaying) aspect of the game was still in pieces (designwise). From what we have seen, however, we think they could well accomplish their three goals.

So now let's take a look at ~~Red Baron~~, er, we mean *Knights of the Sky*. You'll have to pardon the error; you see, **Microprose** had planned to call their WWI air game "Red Baron" (indeed, in the early days, that is what it was called in-house). The title "Red Baron" was dear to Microprose CEO Bill Stealey and co-founder/lead designer Sid Meier's heart since an arcade game of that name played a role in the founding of Microprose (a famous story recounted numerous times in Microprose literature). However, Dynamix beat them to it, having acquired the trademark before Microprose could. It is a rare event when someone beats out Bill Stealey.

TITLE:	Knights of the Sky
SYSTEM:	IBM (640K required)
# PLAYERS:	1-2 (with modem)
PRICE:	$59.95
DESIGNER:	Jeffery Briggs
PUBLISHER:	Microprose Software Hunt Valley, MD

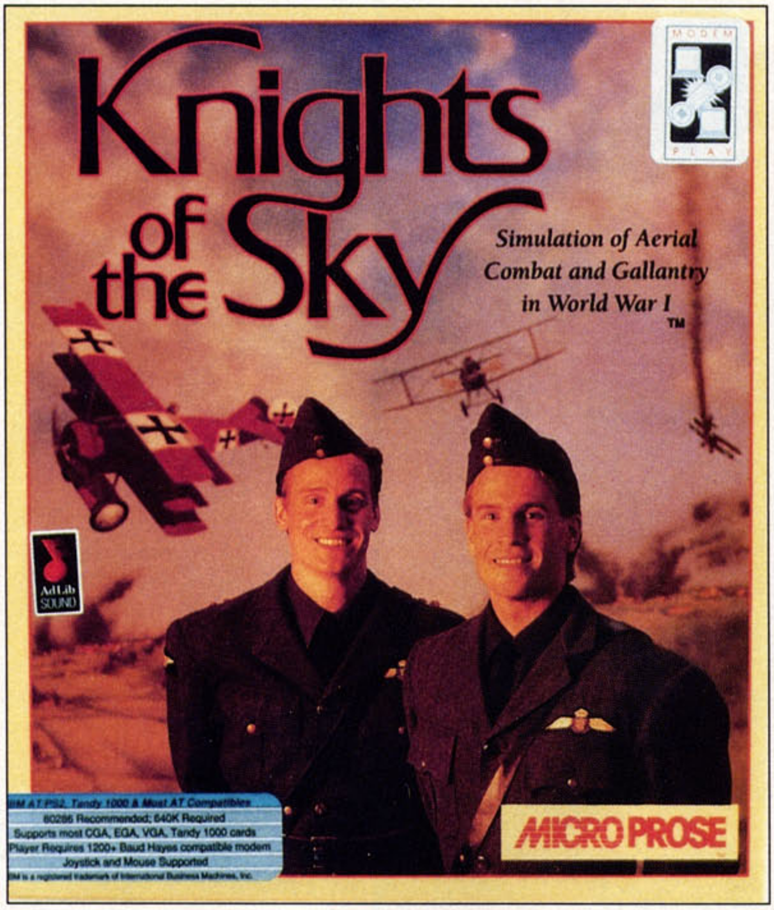
One is the Deadliest Number

One of the first things you will notice when playing *KOTS* is that, seemingly, one hit will bring down your plane. Now that doesn't seem very realistic, does it? But wait a minute. Let's look at that. From the first day *KOTS* hit the shelves, a debate has raged (well, maybe that's too strong, how about 'a lively debate has occurred') concerning this one-hit feature.

Both sides can call upon history. Stories exist that describe long, drawn-out duels with multiple hits, as do stories that point out time and time again that a single well-placed burst would take a plane down. Arguments on this question have gotten down to the mathematics involved. "If a plane fires X rounds, and X rounds hit, what are the chances that the hit will be a critical hit, etc. etc. etc.". We think these arguments miss the point.

Most WWI aviators stalked an opponent; they did not come in with guns a-blazin'(if they did, they tended to be short-lived). It was a fearful thing to have hot lead ripping through canvas and wood. There was no real protection of the body or the critical parts of the plane. Beyond the outright fear of being shot to death was the very real fear of a punctured fuel tank (self-sealing tanks were improvements for another World War) and the ensuing possibility of a lonely, fiery death. Death was a constant copilot for the WWI aviator.

So, how do you capture this reality in a computer game? It's hard to make death real when you can take multiple hits and monitor them on a hit-o-meter, as many games allow you to do. "OK, I can take 3 more hits before I have to disengage." That doesn't seem realistic to us. What *does* seem realistic is the ten-



sion and sweaty palms we get when we play *KOTS*. Just knowing that one well-placed burst/shot will bring us down makes us hop like Mexican jumping beans on a hot plate whenever we hear guns blazing behind us — even more so when we are playing against a human opponent (using the modem play feature). Your heart *will* beat faster.

Of course, WWI aficionados who cut their teeth on dogfights with miniatures rules and boardgames are bound to be disappointed with the fact that you can't limp home with that wing sliced up like an avant garde sculpture or tail "Streamlined by Spandau." There's a lot to be said for *knowing* that you came close to "buying it," but managing to cheat the "reaper" for another dogfight, anyway. So, the "guaranteed critical hit with every hit" syndrome works both *for* and *against* this otherwise masterfully crafted game.

With all that having been said, here is the explanation of the one-hit phenomenon from *KOTS* designer, Jeff Briggs: "Actually you can sustain multiple hits, but only the critical hit that takes you out is apparent. Hits that only go through canvas and wood are not telegraphed to the player". When *CGW* suggested that it would have been good to telegraph those non-critical hits via a sound clue, Jeff agreed and indicated that if they had it to do over again, or as he put it in the proverbial programmer's lament, if they had "had more time," they would have put in just such a sound clue.

The Look And Feel of WWI

The planes "feel" realistic. The flight dynamics and the sounds of the sputtering engines are constant reminders that these early aircraft were mere minnows when compared with the killer sharks found in jet combat games. Altitude is king in WWI air combat, where gaining it is hard and losing it is all too easy.

In the campaign game, you begin as a corporal and work your way up through the ranks. As time progresses (the campaign game begins in May 1916), better planes become available. Of course, the Germans are developing better aircraft as well. When you reach the rank of Captain, you have the option of moving the location of your base.

In between flights, you learn of the activities of other "knights of the sky", both friendly and hostile. Your goal is to be the "ace of aces" (the flier with the most confirmed kills). As part of reaching that goal or staying on top once the goal is attained, you will probably want to challenge other high-scoring enemy aces to personal combat (conversely, they can challenge you as well).

Like *F-19* and *F-15II*, *KOTS* graphics are polygon-filled and nicely rendered. What we particularly like is the F2 tactical view that "puts you at a point in space that allows you to see both your fighter and the closest enemy" (you can toggle the F2 key to see other aircraft as well). It gives you an immediate orientation to the enemy's location in a dogfight. You will play most of the game, especially in a combat situation, switching between the standard forward view and the F2 tactical view. Also, while many simulation gamers do not care for the unrealistic-looking chunky scenery you get by using polygon-filled technology, the Microprose system allows for numerous external views of the airplane being calculated simultaneously. This means that you can get an esthetically superior vantage point of the craft's behavior from almost any angle at almost any time. That's a trade-off you can live with!

Further, when an aircraft is shot down, the game goes into a replay mode that is an excellent example of effective display design. After watching the replay from the "forward view" (above and behind your aircraft), you can select from three other views to view the same action (reverse view, predator view, and the exciting trailer view). Well done, guys!

Being There is All the Fun

The missions themselves are structured very much like Microprose's other flight games. You receive your orders, take off from your aerodrome, fly the selected course (or not), perform the mission required (or not), and return to base (or not). Missions include patrols, recon escorts, bombing, strafing, and balloon bursting. Figuratively speaking, be prepared for "hours of boredom followed by seconds of sheer terror". Lest someone take that last sentence literally, let's make it clear that the game does a good job of simulating the fact that WWI pilots did not take off, jump immediately into combat, and then land (or crash). There is the sometimes tedious task of flying to the mission location. The potential tedium, however, is usually relieved by the presence of hostile aircraft in the area through which your flight plan passes. You can engage or "stay on course" and hope they are too busy with their mission which, in turn, you hope is *not* "intercept enemy aircraft". The tedium all but disappears when you fly in accelerated time. Time passes rapidly and your destination looms up more rapidly. Don't try to do much maneuvering in accelerated time, though, or you'll be all over the sky. Instead, use accelerated time when flying straight and level towards your target and be on a constant lookout for the enemy by toggling the F2 key.

The game includes 20 different WWI aircraft and dozens of enemy pilots to fly against, the most awesome, of course, being



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the Red Baron himself. But what sets *KOTS* apart from the other WWI air combat games mentioned above is that you can play against pilots much more crafty that the computer-controlled Red Baron (although he is no slouch). With its head-to-head feature you and a friend (or enemy for that matter) can fire your machine guns and duel it out in the skies. Playing one another in the offices of *CGW* (via null modem connection) has been a real hoot. The office next door wonders what all the yelling is about. Great feature! However, while the campaign game has variety, head-to-head combat is always the same: you start headed towards one another a couple of miles apart and already having attained sufficient altitude. We have a rule in the office that we will fly past one another before engaging, since those head-on chicken runs are usually over much too quickly.

Oops!

● In spite of the tension you face in combat mentioned above, you don't really face death that often in *KOTS*. At low difficulty levels it is rare to die in a crash. If you crash on your side of the front you are found and returned to your base. If you crash in Hunland, most of the time you either sneak across the front at night and make your way home, are captured but escape, or you are captured then released by your magnanimous foes out a sense of chivalry (since they have heard of your glorious reputation). Puke!

At higher difficulty levels you are more likely to die in a crash, but even then, you will survive a nose-dive crash approximately half the time. Designer Jeff Briggs indicated that your angle of descent and speed affect your chance of surviving a crash and was surprised at *CGW*'s survival rate on the nose-dive crashes. By the way, the *type* of critical hit you sustain determines how much control your aircraft has after being hit.

Even when you die, you can elect to be resurrected. Death, where is thy sting? Our recommendation is to bite the bullet (pun intended) and resolve to let dead pilots stay dead. Of course, the whole question is moot when playing head-to-head with your ego and reputation on the line.

● When playing "Dogfight Encounter" you face a lone ace of your choice. These aces tend to hug the earth, forcing you to fight close to the deck. Even at difficulty level five, the enemy aces will sometimes crash while maneuvering. The only way you will know this is to see it happen or to toggle F2 and notice that the enemy plane has disappeared. There should be a victory screen when the enemy is defeated (or at least a replay when he crashes such as the one you get if you actually shoot him down).

● The F2 tactical view is great for combat, but it should have been disabled when the enemy is hidden in the clouds. You can locate the enemy in the clouds by hitting the F2 key which centers on the enemy (even if you can't see him). Fighting in the clouds would have been so much more realistic had this simple (we assume) fix been done.

Conclusions

Jeff Briggs has done a good job of making WWI air combat live and breathe for us. The modem play feature is particularly appreciated. This game is a must for WWI fans and flight simulation fans.

Comparing the Games

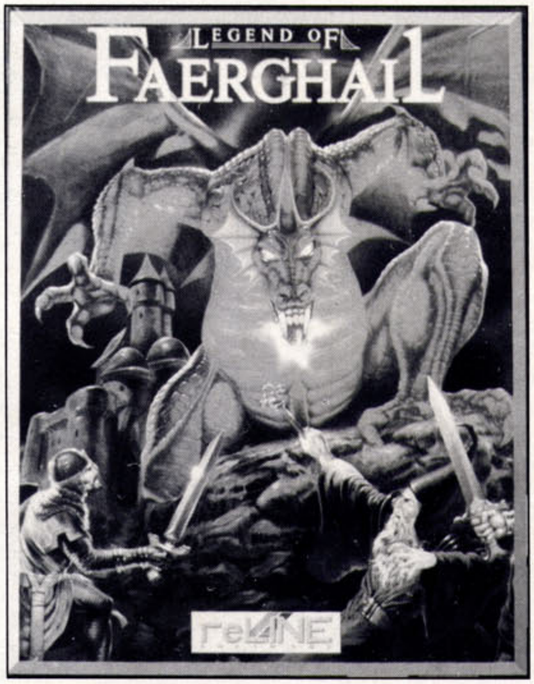
As of this writing we have not received final code on Dynamic's *Red Baron*. As soon as we do, we will compare the WWI titles in *CGW* (hopefully in our March issue).

Ring Around Valhalla

Electronic Zoo's Legend of Faerghail

By Peter Olafson

TITLE:	Legend of Faerghail
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST and IBM
REVIEWED:	Amiga
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Olaf Barthel, Veith Schorgenhummer and Mathias Kastner
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Zoo Baltimore, MD



A curious mix, this *Legend of Faerghail* (*LOF*). A three-disk, three-dimensional role-playing game released by Germany's **ReLINE Software** and imported by **Electronic Zoo**, *LOF* is essentially a *Bard's Tale* cousin with a horde of bells and whistles.

Immediate impression: It's a beaut! *LOF* is a feast for both eyes and ears, vast enough to lose oneself in for a month and saturated with features to improve the quality of play. It is as though the designers had sat down to create a game that had the options other CRPGs lacked. And yet, while handsome and feature-packed, a longer acquaintance found *LOF* rough-edged in places and ill-thought-out or incomplete in others.

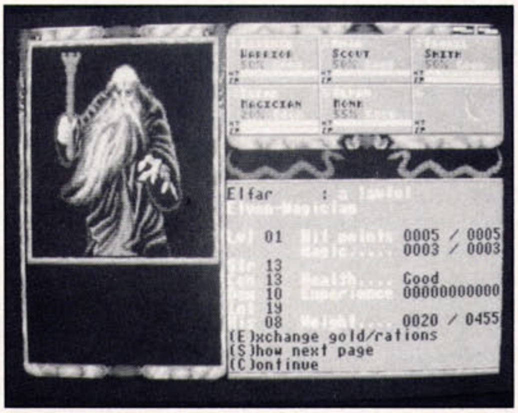
The game begins in Thyn — another town-by-menu, a la *Champions of Krynn* — and never was a community better named. There are few clues to your mission at the start: simply that the normally peaceful elves are acting odd. Specifically, they're at war with Thyn County, and the player has been charged with gathering a party and journeying to neighboring Cyldane County to ask for support. The count of Thyn gives the band an amulet (which they'll need soon enough) and those instructions, and that's it, son.

Along the way, they explore a heavily-forested countryside and pass through eight dungeons (for want of a better term) ranging from a dwarven mine to a lizard temple to a derelict castle to an elvish palace, each with its own distinctive look and feel.

It's in dungeon deep that the game really makes its mark. The lustrous, deep-hued graphics, while static or barely animated, are downright *Dungeon Master*-ish in detail. Role-players who loved *Bard's Tale II: The Destiny Knight* for its size, but despaired of the repetitive skulls-on-the-walls motif, will be tickled pink. Moreover, each dungeon is mammoth, with more than four levels and 1,200 rooms *each*. (The level I'm mapping is roughly 30-by-30.) Supplementing the good looks is a healthy supply of digitized sounds — slushy footsteps and moaning wind out of doors, echoing footsteps, slamming doors and dripping water in dungeons. This place feels like a real place.

Get out the graph paper. Automapping of a sort has been included, but it's a privilege, not a right. It requires a particular object or spell to accomplish it and you'll have to wear down your pencil a bit first. (There's a map of Thyn in the fat and useful manual, but the woods are dark and deep, running into trees is painful and there are a number of interesting unmapped locations out there.)

Combat, of course, is inevitable in this sort of game. Fortunately, it is a bit more sophisticated than usual in *LOF*. Weapons and armor accrue damage during the fighting, but, if a blacksmith is in the party (a good move), they can be repaired in the field. Characters can shift between four rows, depending on their defensive or aggressive posture. (Unfortunately, lateral movement to protect weak or exposed party members is not permitted.)



Also, while characters accumulate the usual experience points, the points garnered actually reflect damage inflicted on the enemy and success in spellcasting for a change. A character doesn't have to strike the death blow to gain experience.

Finally, the game does an excellent job tracking combat with a series of small charts that show experience points, gold rations gained and damage taken. A lot of useful information is pressed into a small space.

The characters have the usual CRPG stats and, in the fashion of **Interplay**'s *Dragon Wars*, a set of skills. Most of these are commonplace, but an especially nice addition is "Concentration." This attribute governs success in both spellcasting and learning to cast new spells. (There are no fewer than six spellcasting character classes, each with mutually exclusive sets of spells purchased in town.)

Concentration is also handy for linguists. Seven languages may be learned, in addition to the Common Tongue, so concentration will prove invaluable in managing the party's peaceful withdrawal from encounters or trading items. Talking beats fighting *any* day in my book.

However, this option doesn't appear to have been fully exploited. In a game so thin on hard information — the party is not even clearly steered toward a starter dungeon — this would have been a good way to insert tidbits of news and gossip, as well as serving to flesh out the count's account. Whatever one's characters learn in *LOF*, they learn with blood.

However, *LOF* smooths the way with a number of time-saving features. For instance, when the characters go shopping and choose an item they cannot afford with cash on hand, they will be asked if they would like to have the balance deducted from their bank accounts. When they stay at an inn, it is possible to choose a simple night's rest or purchase the equivalent of an "American plan" that includes rations. If they go into combat against animals, they are hunting, so the post-combat reward is likely to be rations. After all, buffalo do not carry short swords. If the characters wish to deposit or withdraw all available funds from the bank, a tap on the return key does the trick. It is the thoughtful consideration of these features, mints on a hotel pillow, that set the basic tenor of this game.

Unfortunately, there is a dark side to *LOF* as well. Portions are as slow as a dying troll retreating through a swamp in full plate armor. For example, entering a town requires an almost 30-second load, even with the game on hard disk. One can speed things up a bit by disabling certain features, but this is just about long enough to wonder if there's something more productive you could be doing with your time.

Then there is the issue of play balance. As is not uncommon in games of this type, a beginning party will have a difficult time getting under way without some poor soul getting killed off. Characters can be restored to life at the town temples, but at a hefty price of 300 gold pieces per level.

So it is especially nice that the game supports characters imported from **EA**'s *The Bard's Tale* series and **SSI**'s *Phantasie* and *Phantasie III*. Peteroo, my 32nd-level fighter from *Bard's Tale II*, came over as a


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level one punk in *LOF* (but with 427 hit points!). (Regrettably, the upscale weapons, armor and special items do not make the transfer.)

For players who aren't fortunate enough to have data disks from these early games lying about, *LOF*'s answer to early death is Siegurd, a giant warrior who intercepts the party outside town, just happens to be going the same direction and nags the party ceaselessly until they allow him to join them.

Ah, Siegurd. Siegurd is at once a blessing and part of the problem. Once admitted to the party, he slices and dices monsters with appalling efficiency and restores a limited number of lives to characters who die. He may well be the only thing that keeps one's tea party alive at this stage of the game.

Yet, counting on a god-like nonplayer character to ensure party survival is neither an ideal game design nor likely to lend itself to player satisfaction. It is not entertaining to watch this stranger get all the credit (not to mention most of the experience points). Taking the monsters down a notch would have accomplished much the same thing.

If one does not accept Siegurd into the party, he'll go away and mope a bit, but he'll be back (again and again). Unfortunately, such appearances can interfere with the graphics in surrounding squares so that trees disappear and mapping becomes a pain.

In addition, beating up on Siegurd is not an option. This reviewer's party settled, rather resentfully, for making him carry *all* the booty. (Hint: Accept him, use him until your characters are up to level 2 or 3, then take him into town and dismiss him.)

In addition, combat is rarely forced upon the party. Occasionally they'll run into monsters who take "greet" to mean "fight." But after one combat round, *LOF* will allow them to withdraw from the fray without prejudice and with credit for damage done. (The monsters will pursue them to the border of the monsters' particular domain, slowing the party's progress. However, the "lure" command will drop loot to throw even pursuing monsters off one's trail.)

Moreover, *LOF* is downright sloppy in places. The translation from the original German is occasionally ungrammatical and awkward. One important command — to equip your party with weapons and armor — is simply wrong. It is "D" rather than "E."

At the technical end, *LOF* is fancy, but is lacking in fine points. It installs itself painlessly on a hard disk and adds the necessary disk assignments to the startup-sequence file. (What it fails to do is assign the save disk to hard disk. The players must do that on their own.) It uses expanded RAM for an animated display of one-on-one combat which displays much bellowing and clashing of arms, but this is purely window-dressing and the character appearance relies solely on class and not on species. The display adds nothing to strategy.

However, these sequences may be one of the rare occasions in which a digitized curse can be heard in a computer game. It is muttered when a character misses his mark and this writer could not believe his ears until noticing that the sound file on Disk 2 was *named* for the offending word. This usage would not be a problem if the situation really called for it, but it simply does not call for it here (and this is not the only point at which tastelessness surfaces). Wasn't someone listening? Didn't someone play this game before it was released?

The game even multi-tasks, a rare virtue in a program of *LOF*'s size. However, *LOF* is not bug-free. In the initial Amiga version of the game, there is no way to get by the riddling elf who guards the entrance to the pyramid. He will not even accept a correct answer. (A fix should be available from **Electronic Zoo** by the time this issue reaches the shelves.)

Also, on several occasions a "structure table full" notice appeared when the party was entering a town. The program anticipated the guru meditation by having me save the game, but when restored, the party was in an inescapable position. (An EZ rep suggested the problem might come from extra memory.) In addition, at least one dungeon doorway changed its location when seen from a different direction.

It would be hard not to be enchanted with the visuals and promise of this vast fantasy world and they go a long way toward making *LOF* a full-time job. It may be running on four or five cylinders, but it takes one downtown. And once there, it might be too much enjoyment to even notice. **CGW**

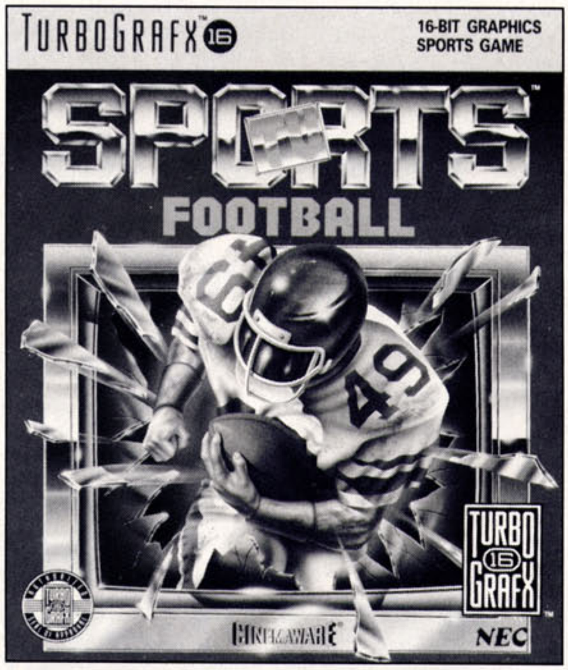
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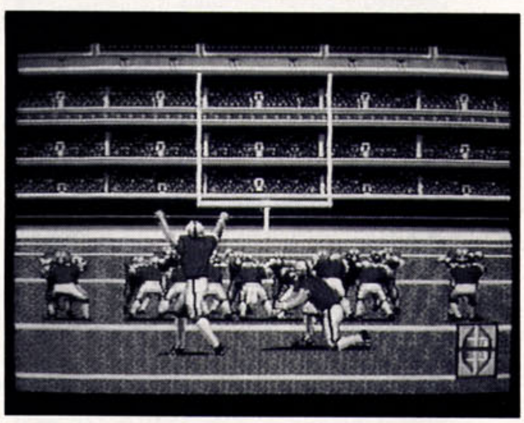
TV Sports Football *for the TurboGrafx-16*

by Matt Taylor

NEC presents *You Make the Call....*
"It's third and long for the Thunderbolts with time running out. Jim Haly drops back to pass, but can't find anyone open. He scrambles, but gets no further than the line of scrimmage when a Shark knocks the ball loose with a bone-jarring hit. The pigskin sails ten yards downfield where Larry Lightning of the Thunderbolts recovers it and runs into the end zone. Is it a touchdown?"

The above is a typical scenario in **Cinemaware**'s *TV Sports Football*, a proven computer hit which was recently translated to the TurboGrafx 16 system. Not only does the game boast some excellent graphics and superb digitized voices, it also blends the two most important ingredients for a successful sports simulation on a dedicated machine: action and a realistic feel.





Pregame Warmup (Football Options Aplenty)

After the football player crashes through the TV set on the title screen (perhaps looking for his agent, who couldn't get him Canseco-dollars... whoops, wrong sport!), a menu appears containing an exhibition game, league play (full season), an offensive practice, and the coach's clipboard. The clipboard accommodates scouting reports of each of the eight fictitious teams, and rates players in several different categories, demonstrating each club's strengths and weaknesses. There is only one "string;" injuries never occur, and modification and creation of athletes is not permitted.

TITLE:	TV Sports Football
SYSTEM:	TurboGrafx-16
# PLAYERS:	1-5 (TurboTap & additionalTurbo-Pads needed for multiple players)
PRICE:	$61.99
DESIGNER:	Cinemaware
PUBLISHER:	NEC Technologies, Inc. Wood Dale, IL

The practice session presents an opportunity to try out the offensive repertoire (which is the same for every team) without a defense harassing the player. An exhibition game is a stand-alone match, perfect for a game among friends or a chance for one or more players to see how their skills stack up against a computer-managed opponent.

Finally, the league option is a single *season* in which every team plays intra-divisional rivals twice and out-of-division opponents once. At the end of ten weeks of play, the top two teams from each division have a final showdown for a spot in the championship. An outcome must be determined for each game, whether by straight computer simulation, which generates instantaneous results, or by regular, human interactive gameplay. Thankfully, the programmers included a password, a sentence of seemingly garbled letters, which can be input at a later date to continue the season in the same position as before. This reviewer was slightly annoyed to find that there is no provision for TurboGrafx-CD and TurboBooster Plus owners to use their peripherals to save the game.

The biggest strength of *TVSF* is that no matter what football situation is chosen, any combination of players up to a maximum of four per team can participate. Furthermore, the computer automatically takes control of individual players if no commands are input with the corresponding TurboPads. Competitors can rejoin the fray any time by simply pushing a direction key.

Three Yards And A Cloud Of Dust (Offensive Strategies)

After the automatic kickoff and subsequent return, the offense has four general formations to choose from: Pro-Set, Formation, Shotgun and Kick. If one of the first three are selected, four specific plays are displayed, showing the receivers' routes in the traditional chalkboard manner. If Kick is chosen, the player is then given an option to punt away, fake a punt, or try a field goal if within the opponent's 50-yard line. The punt (which can be blocked) is a simple aim and fire situation similar to passing, while the field goal kicker's task is much more complicated. One must adjust two moving lines, one representing distance and the other direction, in order to hear the satisfying "It's good!" While this is by far the most creative kicking operation in a video football game, there is, unfortunately, no way to fake or block a field goal.

One player on each team controls the a quarterback (and is responsible for play calling), while the other players can change back and forth between receivers and running backs. Once a play is called, the view switches back to the vertically scrolling gridiron. The quarterback screams a play-calling code in a convincing voice, and has a chance to send someone in motion

before the ball is snapped. As the QB, you can then order the computer to automatically pass, pitch to a running back, or take control yourself. If the player is directing the quarterback, he can hand off to a back at anytime, hurl one up for grabs, or scramble for daylight. If one takes too long without crossing the line of scrimmage, he'll get called for offensive holding.

The passing mechanism is one of those "easy to learn but difficult to master" systems. After pressing down the button to set the QB into a throwing stance, the player must point the QB's arm in the direction of the receiver, while continuing to hold down the button until an "X" marks where he desires the ball to land. After some practice, players will find it challenging, albeit not impossible, to judge exactly how much of a lead to give receivers. Don't overdo it, because "intentional grounding" is called if there are no receivers within fifteen yards of the ball's final resting place! One major imperfection which this reviewer noticed is that when a defender is applying tight coverage, the ball is always knocked down (i.e., it can't be caught off the deflection). When in the clear, a player's chance of a reception or interception is based on his "hands" rating.

n additional oversight discovered is that one is not allowed to throw the ball out of the end zone.

If the player chooses to pitch the ball to an RB, just follow the holes the blockers are opening and run for it. The obvious flaw in the running game is that one can't just bull his way forward; if one tries pushing through his line he might as well be running into a brick wall. There's no chance for a one-yard "plunge over the top" play. Another problem is that the QB has no control over who takes the pitch. A final concern, although this is more of a general observation about offense, is that a player can't dive forward for those extra few yards, while defenders have the privilege of making flying tackles.

Hold That Line (Defensive Dispositions)

On the other side of the ball, there are four settings available to the "big D;" the 6-1, 5-2, 3-4 and "Special." The four specific dfenses within the first three formations are run outside, run inside, pass, and blitz. The Special options are punt block, punt return, long bomb defense, and goal line stand (only offered when defending inside your ten yard line).

Before the snap of the ball, all members of the defending team can switch back and forth before deciding which player to control for the duration of the play. If they spot something suspicious in the offense's formation, they have the option of changing individual player assignments to either a blitz or man-to-man coverage (i.e., defensive "audibles"). While flipping from player to player, they can reposition them—but the referee is constantly watching for offsides and encroachment.

Upon hearing "hike," that time-honored invitation to pound some 250-pound slab of meat-on-the-hoof into the Astroturf, players may wish to restrain themselves and consider the situation before welcoming the opposing quarterback to the TVFL. Keeping in mind that the human-controlled players are always superior to the computer-commanded athletes, one's approach should depend mainly on which defense was called. If it was a 3-4 pass, it is a good idea for the human-controlled players to either guard against the run or rush the QB if holes open in the line. If it was a 6-1 run inside, then watch goal-bound speedsters the computer might stack on the sidelines.

A general bug in the defense which can get really frustrating is that if a pass prevent is called, for example, and the opponent hands off, for some unknown reason the player's computer-directed teammates continue their coverage for several seconds before finally reacting to the ball. Laterals, flea-flickers and the like are not allowed in this game, so why shouldn't your electronic buddies be privy to this information and immediately crunch the runner like the more sensible human players? Another point of contention is that the muscleheaded linemen are programmed to block each other and won't stray from their task, even to pick up a loose ball!

Toss Of The Coin (Final Observations)

TVSF is unique among video football games in the way it manages to incorporate fast-paced action, an excellent multi-player environment, and even (gasp) an extent of realism. True simulation enthusiasts will undoubtedly be disappointed with an incomplete range of strategy and options, referring to the limited play selection and lack of tactics such as onsides kickoffs and reverse handoffs, and the glaring elimination of recorded statistics. Another missing element is the weather factor; the field is the same mud-free carpet every day. Finally, many will find the computer defeated too easily after gaining some experience with the game. However, football fans in general looking for an intense action contest with well-animated, detailed graphics (but why do they have to wear the same red and blue jerseys every time?), realistic voices (though some more crowd noise would have been appreciated), and a broad enough range of formations to keep things lively should take this ball in stride. Despite the scattered flags on the play, as a multi-player game the call on *TV Sports Football* with this official is: "The kick is up... It's long enough... It's good!" **CGW**

THE QUICK.





THE DEAD.





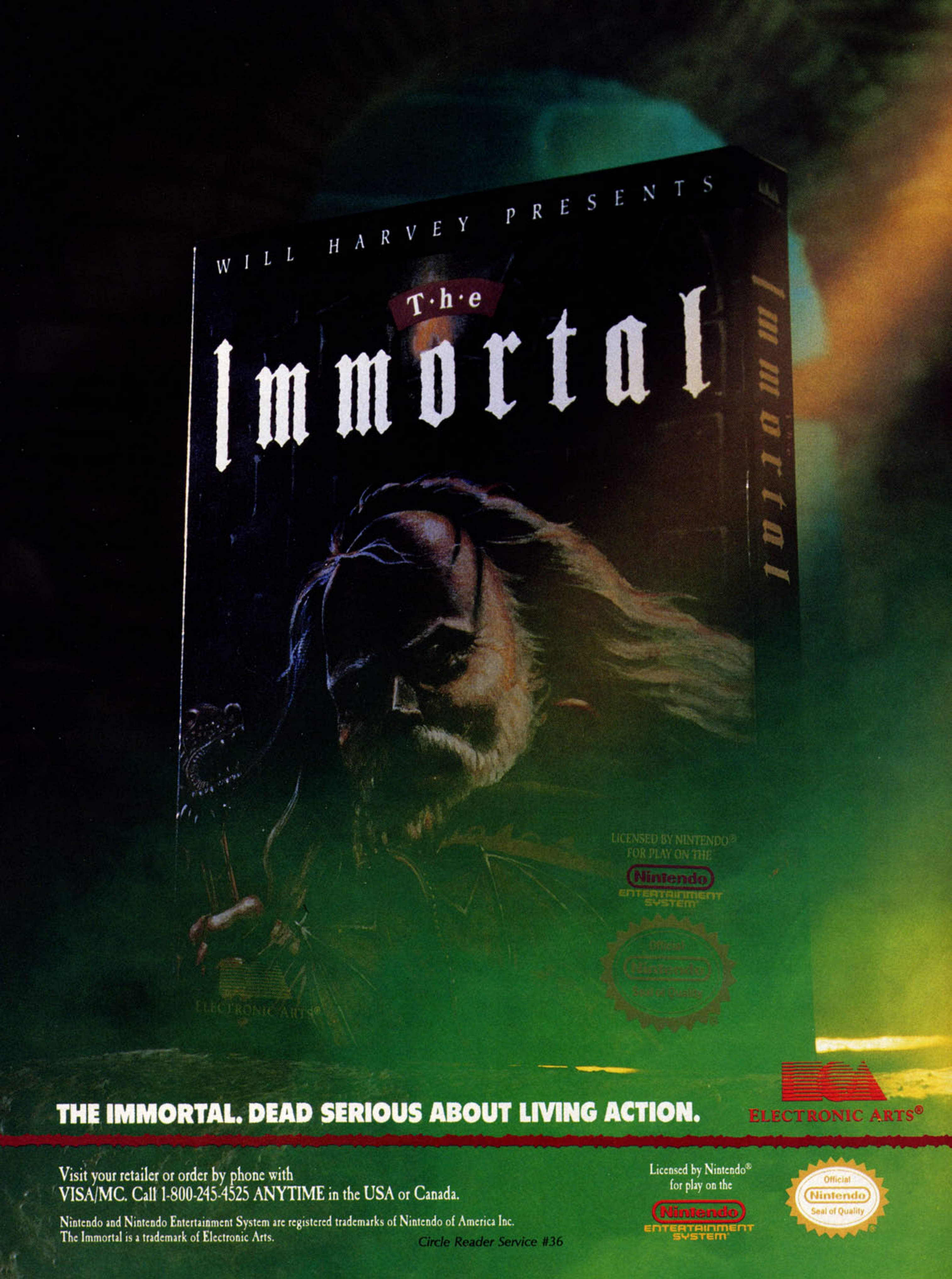
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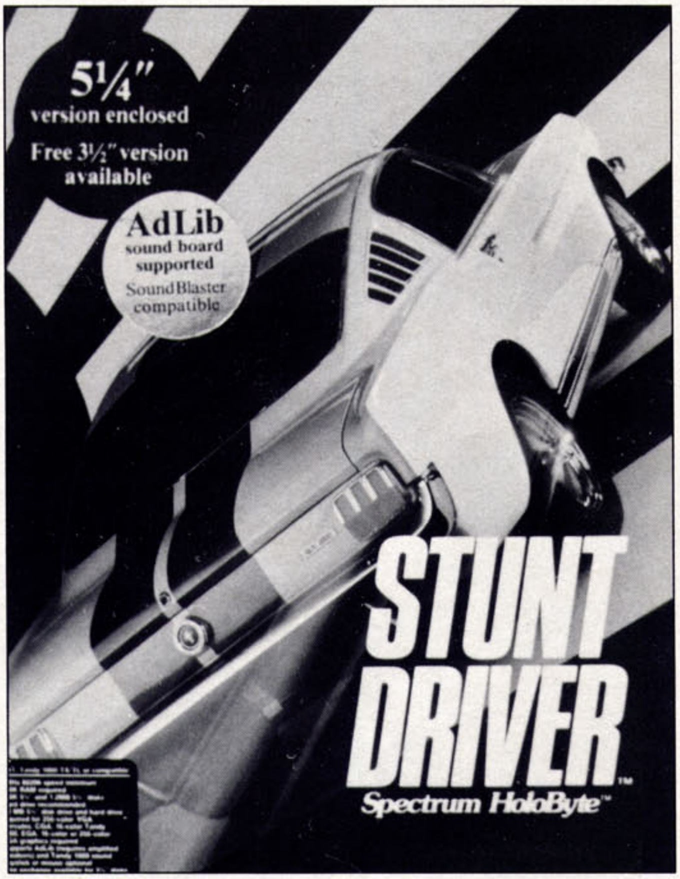


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Tracks of Hazards

Spectrum HoloByte's Stunt Driver

by Paul Nielsen



If it were not for the loops, drawbridges, corkscrew jumps and little old lady in the VW swerving all over the track, *Stunt Driver* would be almost like driving NASCAR. As it is, though, enrolling in Big Al's Institute of Stunt Course Driving is more akin to a demolition derby than a pleasant Sunday drive at NASCAR.

Armed with a joystick (or maybe a mouse, but please don't try the keyboard) and a 1966 Shelby Mustang 350, the player is subjected to a thorough bashing by the other cars. Joining the pesky VW is a Porche 911, a Camaro IROC Z and a helicopter in the air. Watching the action from a series of TV cameras, *Stunt Driver* takes on the feel of a remote-control "Hot Wheels" with sadistic kids determined to wreck as many cars as possible.

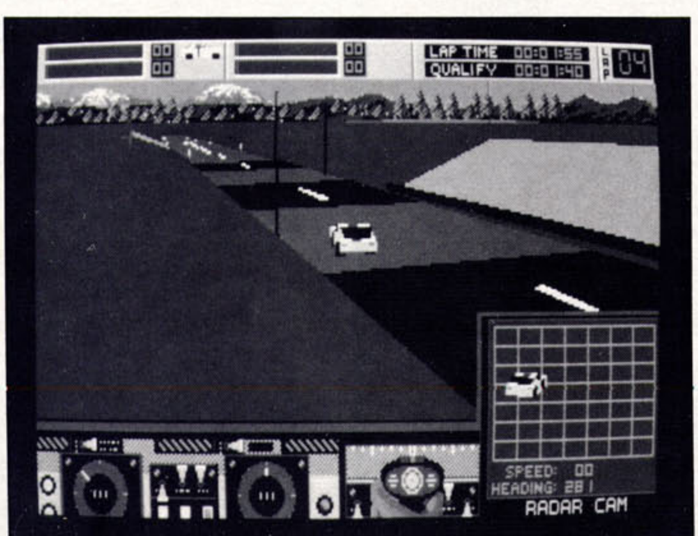
The Game

Overall, *Stunt Driver* plays well. It offers such excellent play balance for the beginner, in fact, that the initial difficulty factor may need to be fudged by the experienced simulation fan. By simply changing a few options and allowing the competitors to drive with their artificial personalities intact, however, one can experience a satisfying challenge from the outset. When one first experiences the colorful background and animation graphics, it is fairly easy to compare *Stunt Driver* with a plethora of driving games available on the computer. Once one adds eight different camera views (constantly at the player's disposal), a VCR feature that replays the last few seconds of any race (similar to **EA**'s *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation*) and fast-moving action (due to the polygon-fill technology) into the mix, the game takes on the attributes of a simulation. Finally, when one begins to encounter the artificial personalities and grasp the basic tactics necessary to defeat them, the game achieves a well-rounded and challenging dimension, as well. For example, players will want to learn how to hit the other cars at just the right angle to inflict more damage than one's own vehicle would receive from the collision. By slowing down one's opponents significantly and only being slightly affected oneself, a distinctive edge is taken by the human player. Stock car racers have done this for years, but now players can really duplicate the tactic on their computer screens.

TITLE:	Stunt Driver
SYSTEM:	IBM
# PLAYERS:	1-2 (w/ modem)
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNERS:	Paul Mogg
PUBLISHER:	Spectrum HoloByte Alameda, CA

Revvin' Up (Hardware Considerations)

Spectrum HoloByte recommends a 386/33-Mhz computer if one wishes to have the most complete detail level — 256-color VGA, digitized sound, distant detail, etc. However, the game plays well even in EGA 16-color mode, as this reviewer found out on a 386/33-Mhz, 386 SX/20-Mhz *and* a 286/12-Mhz. Adjusting the realism levels to match the machine resulted in a smooth, although less visually attractive, game. PS/1 buyers, for example, need to be aware that *Stunt Driver* is simply not the same on the PS/1 that it is on even a 386SX. Today's sophisticated games require more horsepower than word processing at the office.



As for the game's sound effects, the digitized roar of the engine rattled the case on the reviewer's Compaq 286e, even without a sound board. However, the squeal of the tires (an important part of the *Stunt Driver* experience) is difficult to hear with the internal PC speaker and requires addition of a sound board in order to experience the full aural experience. Adding an **AdLib** or

Sound Blaster card improves the enjoyment of the game immensely. Then all of the sounds from the engine, tires and horn can add to the realism.

A Course Is a Course, Of Course (Map Editor)

In addition, the five pre-set tracks offer different obstacles and, of course, strategies. Players can put the "pedal to the metal" on the simple oval of the training track, but need to be considerably more cautious on the hairpin turns of the "Sidewinder." In addition, some courses have oil slicks to either bypass or slow down for.

The "Sidewinder" also has a great little "Easter egg" (i.e. neat discovery for the players to encounter). If the little old lady in the VW gets too annoying, one can get therapy by loading the "Sidewinder" course. Then, when the player sees the German engineers standing in the middle of the track (just like in the VW commercial), it's time to mow 'em down! One even gets to hear the thump and yell as sweet (?) revenge is exacted for the VW's interference. It is not exactly the same blood-curdling scream as playing *Life and Death* without using anesthesia on the patients, but it's close.

If one gets tired of the five preset tracks, the Map Editor lets the player set things up just right. From the placement of the TV cameras to get customized viewpoints of the action (using the F8 key) to the location of loops, jumps and oil slicks which affect the optimal speed competitors can manage on each track, the map editor gives the player control. If desired, the player can lay out custom tracks and configurations using a simple grid sheet combined with "point and click" track/obstacle icons.

In fact, the game is so flexible with regard to customization that the program includes a configuration editor which allows the player to delineate damage levels, crash thresholds (when they are fatal, major or minor), bridge speed, repair rates, friction, and characteristics for both the player's car and opponents' cars/personalities. Indeed, the amateur physicist who is curious about the performance of a maximum-acceleration muscle car in 0.1 gravity can find out.

Duelin' Daredevils (Modem Support)

In the **Spectrum HoloByte** tradition, *Stunt Driver* supports head-to-head racing. Using a direct serial connection or a modem, the action is smooth and the driving is fierce. The "Head-to-Head" option is menu-driven and easy-to-use, especially if one allows the manual to walk him through the procedure step-by-step. Once both players have hit "PLAY" on the main menu and watched the Christmas tree lights to begin the race, the action is on until the requisite number of laps are completed or one of the player's cars cannot continue.

Finish Line

Stunt Driver is a good match for those who enjoy **Atari**'s *Hard Driving* coin-op game. The actual arcade action is very similar and **Atari**'s only advantage is the feel of the wheel. *Stunt Driver* more than makes up for this difference by offering more control and variety.

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Letters From Paradise

"Trip"-Toe Through The Kudos

I'm sorry to have missed your [recent open house] celebration. I want you to know that it gave me pause when I heard about it. It's quite an amazing milestone.

I'll never forget that when I had the idea for **Electronic Arts**, one of the first people I talked to about it was Russ, back in mid-1982. I learned a lot that day. It was very encouraging for me. Ever since then, *CGW* has been the one publication that really means something to me professionally. I continue to read it immediately when it arrives, from cover to cover, knowing that it has both important news and legitimate criticism of the best work in our industry.

Knowing how fragile our industry has been, it is a marvel that *CGW* is ten years young. To think that Reagan was not even president when you started, and the 49ers hadn't even been to a Super Bowl!

I'm excited about joining you for the next ten years.

Trip Hawkins
Chief Executive Officer
Electronic Arts

Does this mean you'll keep reading us as long as the 49ers keep winning? That ought to be good for another decade. Thanks for the kind words.

Ole Man Reader

I have now read the December issue of *CGW* and must compliment/congratulate you that this issue is the best I have seen. I want to wish your staff a merry Christmas and a good new year. Keep up with your good work. It warms an old man's heart. Greetings from Norway.

Ole Kittilsen (45 Years Old)
Rjukan, NORWAY

You mean we get a few more years before the editorial staff is officially considered a bunch of "old men?" To be honest, we have lots of mature readers on our subscription list. We guess that's what happens when you don't trivialize your subject matter or your writing style.

Famous "AMOS"

After reading Paul Rigby's column (*CGW* #76), I was pleased to see him mention *AMOS the Creator*. I thought I would tell your readers that you can buy *AMOS* from **British Magazine Distributors**' Canadian office. Write:
British Magazine Distributors
598 Durham Crescent
Unit 14 Woodstock
Ontario N4S 5X3 CANADA.
You can also Call: 1-519-421-1285.

In England, there's Sandra Sharkey who runs the *STOS* Public Domain Library. She's also going to be doing the same for the newly released *AMOS*. The *AMOS* library is sure to build up in the same way. You can write to Sandra at:
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AMOS handles all the usual constructs and commands you'd expect from a modern BASIC, as well as everything you've ever wanted to be able to do from BASIC — powerful sprite manipulation, sampled sounds, fast blitter objects and copper tricks that were only possible from low-level hardware programming. With over 500 commands to work with, you'll never stop finding new ways of applying its impressive range of commands and features.

I wanted to thank Paul for writing a great column and *CGW* for the many improvements they've implemented this past year.

Nick Peters
Wichita, KS

Whew! And we thought Paul was impressed by AMOS! *Maybe Commodore ought to put* AMOS *on a ROM chip.*

Ryan's Mope

I love your magazine (is it just me or is your magazine getting bigger?). "It's so wonderful I wash my body with it." (See *CGW* #52). I have but one complaint. The paperboard page (where this card may be found) is not laid out properly. Since most people do not need to subscribe every time they get a magazine and they don't use the inquiry service *every* time, yet they would take the trouble to fill out one of these fine little

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cards to let you know what they feel, I suggest putting it on the bottom where it is accessed easily. And no, I am not a glandular, mouth-breathing male adolescent who suffers from terminal acne and has dangerous anti-social tendencies, who wears coke-bottle-bottom glasses, who finds things wrong with magazines to write about and fill up time.

Ryan Denke
Casper, WY

Next time, please send a picture with your complaint, just so we can check. As it is, we realize that you have a point. Just to prove we've got a mind of our own, however, we've put the R.I.D. card on the top. We can't let you readers push us around. After all, we're not just a bunch of pseudo-erudite effete snobs!

Blame Is The Name of the Game Machine

Once again, *CGW* has tread into the bland lands of the dedicated game machines and it has me worried. I understand and agree that any discussion of the computer entertainment industry must include relevant news of its competition, as covered in "Fusion, Transfusion or Confusion" (December, #77) and "Technological Trends for Future Computer Games" (January, #78). I can even accept the fact that The Rumor Bag Guy is reporting on new GameBoy and Sega products more than in previous issues.

Your review of **TurboGrafx 16**'s *Ys I & II* and **Nintendo**'s *Final Fantasy* (#77), however, has pushed my patience too far. The less-than-deceptive bar reading "Special Bonus Section: Cartridge Game Coverage" introducing the section would have been more appropriately labeled, "Warning: Cartridge Game Coverage." More distressing was January's **Turbo-Express** review under what appears to be a new "Cartridge Game Coverage" column.

Is this a policy change? Has *CGW* succumbed to magazine rack peer pressure? *CGW* has been to these lands before and wisely chose to depart quickly. Where are you going now?

Sorry if I seem a bit harsh. I love *CGW* and just think that your staff's time and energy shouldn't be wasted on reviewing dedicated game technology. Your magazine can't do their industry justice and it's not like *CGW* to make half-hearted efforts.

Patrick Buechner
Washington, DC

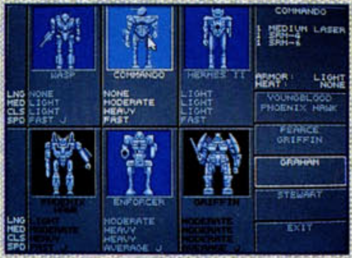
Well, as Al Smith once said, "Let's look at the record." In December of 1989, CGW *had 106 pages with 65 pages of advertising. That leaves 41 pages of computer game coverage. In December of 1990,* CGW *had 130 pages with 63 pages of advertising. Subtract the advertising and the dedicated game machine coverage (less than five pages) and one is left with 62 pages of computer game coverage. That is a 21-page increase in disk-based coverage. Given that kind of increase, we don't feel that we are in any way slighting the market we love dearly in order to do coverage of some selected cartridge games. There are, after all, some cartridge games out there worthy of our attention.*

As for where CGW *is going, we are going the same direction we have always gone. We are striving to provide*

STRIKE BACK



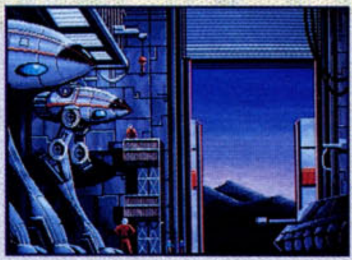
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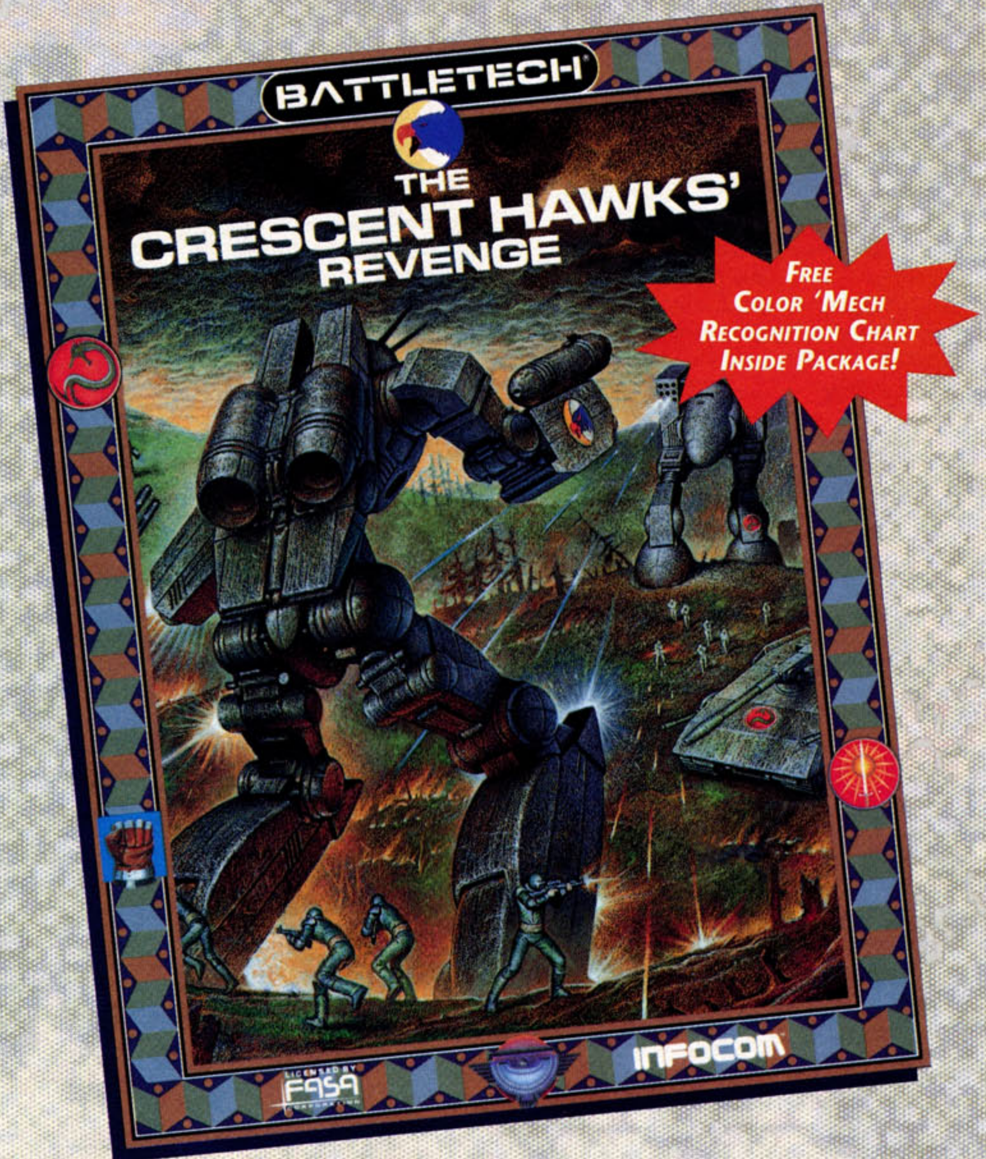


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the information that strategy, simulation, adventure and role-playing gamers, in particular, need to enjoy the full scope of entertainment software. When we dabbled in the world of dedicated game machines in the past, these types of games were not well-represented on the game machines. The great majority of Nintendo *and* Sega Master System *games seemed to be horizontal-scrolling, running-jumping-shooting games with minimal strategy considerations. Now, more sophisticated games are already appearing on the game machines and more sophisticated game machines are on the horizon. If we do not provide information on these sophisticated games to the gaming public, who will? Magazines which specialize in running-jumping-shooting games? Maybe.*

Finally, the game machine situation is not as clear-cut as it was a couple of years ago. With CD-ROM drives and 16-bit processors, the software for these machines is getting much closer to the types of games we cover. If we do not cover the current crop of game machines, how will we cover CD-I (essentially, a dedicated game/entertainment machine), CDTV, and the age of multimedia. Entertainment software in the future will draw from all these influences and, although our staff is busy, it would be irresponsible to ignore products which our readers might like and propagate ignorance while the heretofore disparate portions of the entertainment software industry are continuing to merge.

We must emphasize that the cartridge game coverage is bonus coverage and does not take away from computer game coverage.

Heavy-Duty Complaint

After the last couple (huge) issues, I have some things we ought to discuss. Specifically, money. The damage is clearly your fault and I should be reimbursed. Here's the breakdown:
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$750.00 Grand total.

Of course, I can't ever throw those issues away — the charges for the extra weight would kill me!

It's great to see your publication get so big. You are really a force in the industry. Keep up the great coverage!

Eric Kirchner
Florence, KY

Our legal department has requested that we refrain from responding to the financial aspects of this case and they are in the process of determining probable culpability and the advisability of placing a warning label on larger issues. Meanwhile, we hope the page rate continues to increase over last year's issues and you don't have to subscribe to a user group newsletter in order to get your "expenses" down.

CGW

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2. Albuera, Medellin, Santon, New Orleans, Bridge

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Battles of Napoleon	$32	$32	$32	-	-
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First Over Germany	-	$16	$16	-	-
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GAME SELECTION	APPLE	C64	IBM	ATARI	AMIGA
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Panzer Strike	$16	$16	-	-	-
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Heroes of the Lance	$16	$16	$16	$16	$16
Red Lightning	-	-	$16	$16	$16
First Over Germany	-	$16	$16	-	-
Gettysburg	$16	$16	-	-	$16
Kampfgruppe	$16	$16	-	-	$16
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A = Excellent
B = Above Average
C = Average
D = Below Average
F = Failure

If you wish, you may assign pluses (+) or minuses (-) to your letter grade (i.e. B+, B-, C+, C-, etc.). As always, rate only those games that you have played.

Demographics
(List the appropriate number)

1. What is your age ?

1 = Under 14 years old
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2. What machine(s) do you play games on?

(List all numbers that apply. List the machine you use most often first, the others in decending order of use).

1 = IBM, clones, Tandy
2 = Amiga
3 = Apple 8 bit
4 = Apple IIgs
5 = Atari ST
6 = Atari 8 bit
7 = C-64/128
8 = Macintosh
9 = Other (specify)

3. Assuming that copy protection is here to stay, which type of protection do you consider least offensive:
a) key disk;
b) documentation look-up;
c) code wheel look-up; or
d) non-reproducible chart look-up.

Games

4. Wing Commander (Origin)
5. Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm)
6. Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse)
7. Secret of Monkey Island (Lucasfilm)
8. Ultima VI (Origin)
9. Harpoon (Three-Sixty)
10. SimCity (Maxis)
11. Wings (Cinemaware)
12. M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse)
13. Command HQ (MicroPlay)
14. Savage Empire (Origin)
15. Star Control (Accolade)
16. BattleTech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge (Infocom)
17. Renegade Legion: Interceptor (SSI)
18. Tunnels & Trolls (New World)
19. Countdown (Access)
20. Buck Rogers: Countdown to Doomsday (SSI)
21. Rise of the Dragon (Dynamix)
22. Quest for Glory II: Trial By Fire (Sierra)
23. Ishido (Accolade)
24. Stunt Driver (Spectrum Holobyte)
25. Altered Destiny (Accolade)
26. Shanghai 2 (Activision)
27. Wizardry: Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)
28. James Bond: Operation Stealth (Interplay)
29. MicroLeague Pro Football (MicroLeague Sports)
30. The Immortal (EA)
31. Wing Commander: Secret Mission Disk (Origin)
32. SimEarth (Maxis)
33. BattleChess II: Chinese Chess (Interplay)
34. Nuclear War (New World)
35. Deluxe Scrabble (Virgin Mastertronic)
36. SPOT: The Computer Game (Virgin Mastertronic)
37. Night Shift (Lucasfilm)
38. Harpoon: Scenario Editor (Three-Sixty)
39. Wayne Gretzky 2 (Bethesda)

Articles

40. Bane of the Cosmic Forge Review
41. Shanghai II Review
42. Knights of the Sky Review
43. Command HQ Designer's Notes
44. Scorpion's View: Tunnels and Trolls
45. Taking A Peek
46. Letters From Paradise
47. Scorpion's Mail
48. Stunt Driver Review
49. Rise of the Dragon Review
50. Legend of Faerghail Review
51. BattleTech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge Review and Hints
52. Scorpion's Tale: Quest for Glory II
53. The Rumor Bag
54. Games Rating Chart
55. Tunnels and Trolls Review
56. Command HQ: Replay
57. Over There
58. Castles Preview
59. Editorial
60. This issue overall

Conversions Received

A-10 Tank Killer (Dynamix) Amiga
Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestess (Data East) IBM
Conquest of Camelot (Sierra) ST
Deluxe Paint (EA) ST
Drakkhen (Data East) IBM
Full Count (Lance Haffner) IBM
It Came From The Desert (Cinemaware) IBM
The Manhole (Activision) IBM
MicroLeague Football (MicroLeague) C64
Star Control (Accolade) Amiga
Thunder Strike (Live Studios) IBM
TV Sports Basketball (Cinemaware) IBM

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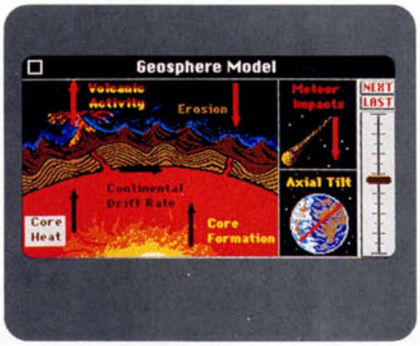
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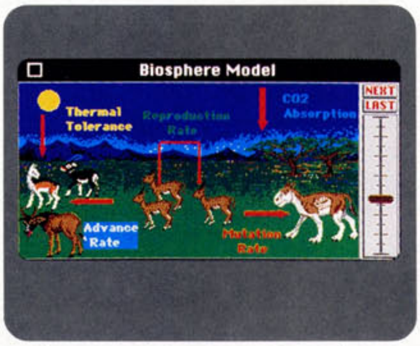
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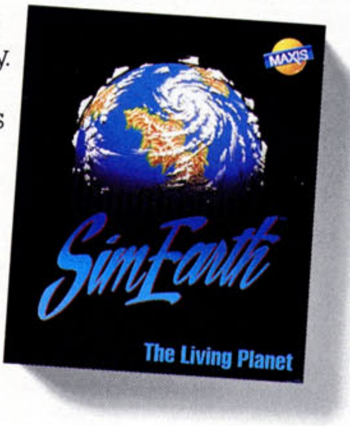


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Beyond the Dark Night...

(Continued from page 19)

Unfortunately, one cannot devise scenarios in *Interceptor*. By choosing 'Live' players for both sides, one can select the types of craft to be flown against each other but cannot pick missions, etc. Players just have to fly whatever mission that the computer deals. Icon overprints make it *very* hard to tell who or how many fighters are in a sector. This is especially bad when there is also a space station in play, since it covers seven squares. Larger craft tend to completely overprint smaller ones and when the same types are on top of each other, going the same direction, there is no way to tell how many are there! Each ship moves in turn, with all fire taking place at the end of the turn. (Thus, by no stretch of the imagination is this a flight simulator). The order in which the ships move is determined by several factors added to a random number. This mean that one can rarely count on moving last — the best time to move. A look at the strategic map will tell who has moved already, since it is difficult to keep track of such things and who will be moving next. Do "utilities" during a friendly ship's movement phase, then access the strategic map and use the "previous key" to step through the turn. Once an enemy ship loses its thrusters it can never change speed or direction and usually moves early in the turn (i.e. he is dead meat). Since points are gained for killing ships, do not let them simply sail away into the star fields. The other tactic is to form a daisy chain of ships following each other, to get on the tail of the enemy who is on one's wingman's tail who is on the tail of ... well, daisy chains happen, but not too often.

Frontal attacks are actually a viable tactic when defending a space station. Why? Because the enemy is attacking the station with their noses pointed towards it, taking damage on their bow armor from the station, and thus are more vulnerable than is usually the case. Otherwise try and concentrate on a few opponents and wear them down quickly. The AI is good but will usually not disengage when its ship isn't damaged. As to the AI: There are no difficulty levels in the game. It still works because there is such a wide variety of ships and weapons that there are just too many options for a human to figure out safe moves. Since all squadrons are made up of three or more different types of ships, the variety of weapons can be mind-numbing — and that makes this game a first-class tactical challenge. The scenarios are balanced by the opposing side receiving additional ships beyond the six normally found in a squadron. In one attack on a space station this reviewer could swear that there were fourteen rebel ships engaged before the attack was over! These are heavy odds when the player has only six of the Empire's finest to stop them. Although fourteen scenarios seems limiting, the ships are always varied and occasionally one side will catch the other at a disadvantage. Therefore the games *will* be different.

Overall, *Interceptor* is quite a good game, very challenging and never the same game twice. This reviewer found no "sure-fire" strategies and no "perfect" design for ships. It is easy to imagine large numbers of people beating the keys well into the night, however, to prove that they have the "perfect" interceptor and the tactics that will always win. *Warning:* do not let this game fall into the hands of avid strategy players. It *will* be harmful to their sleep cycle. **CGW**

Over There

(Continued from page 50)

Blenkinsop and his cronies. Fair enough; one's past exploits are impressive, presenting them with Guinevere's shoelace, for example, which totally ruined Sowerby-Jones. However, the search for Quetzlcoatl's toothpick? Is there such a thing? Well, it's up to the player to find it — and quick.

Such is the batty background to Jim MacBrayne's third adventure game. The first two were created and placed in the public domain. Now Jim has decided to go commercial. A text-only adventure, *The Mission* bears a striking resemblance to the old **Infocom** style. Jim readily acknowledges the **Infocom** influence as his source of motivation.

The layout to *The Mission* is very clean, with the room location shown at the top of the screen. Text is plentiful, well-written and humorous in places. Utilities are numerous; you can RAM-SAVE/LOAD, script a hard copy to the printer, change the screen colors, define the function keys and so on. The parser appears to be of a high quality. For those readers pining after an **Infocom** game as they used to do it "in the old days," you could give Jim a call. For the Amiga with 1 Meg of RAM, costing £7.50, contact: Jim MacBrayne, 27 Paidmyre Cres., Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5AQ, United Kingdom.

Set in the 1920s, **Delphine**'s *Cruise for a Corpse* (*CFAC*) takes place on board a three-master yacht belonging to Greek shipping magnate Niklos Karaboudjan. The player takes on the role of Inspector Raoul Dussentier, who's been invited by Niklos to join him on a dream cruise in the Mediterranean aboard his luxurious yacht.

The cruise has hardly begun when Raoul is summoned in his professional capacity to investigate a scandalous crime — the murder of the host, Niklos Karaboudjan. Raoul would examine the body, but it has disappeared! Who is the murderer? Will he/she strike again? Where is the host's body?

Using a similar system found in *Operation Stealth*, *CFAC* adds the option to question characters. Available in the first quarter of 1991 for Amiga, PC and ST.

Released by **Impressions**, *Blitzkrieg, May 1940* is a hex-based wargame covering the invasion of France during WWII. The player has the option of controlling both sides. The game is played on a turn-by-turn basis using tactical and strategic maps. The obvious objective is to either conquer or defend France, depending on the side one takes. Orders are issued to army commanders, then individual commanders "interpret" the orders. The player can influence their commander's strategy or he can leave it up to the commander's discretion.

Army commanders will tell you of their intentions using a series of messages. Your own General Headquarters (GHQ) will advise you in the same manner. A number of reports are available at the end of each turn (strengths, army effectiveness, etc.). Available now for Amiga and ST. Please check for prices.

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from:

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306

SDC, 60 Boston Road, London, England, W7 3TR. Telephone: 01144-1-567-7621

Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins Square, Burnt Mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ. Telephone: 01144-268-590-766

All of these telephone numbers assume you can dial direct. If you have trouble, contact the international operator. **CGW**

Taking a Peek

(Continued from page 8)

shoot-'em-up one could ask for, but there is also a trading element where players cross the galaxy for purposes of exploration and exploitation. Circle Service #13.

NITRO: What? A Psygnosis game with no shooting? This is a overhead-view automobile racing game. Thirty races, day and night driving with auto repairs and enhancements. Circle Service #14.

RMM Consulting
977 N. Rustic Circle
Dallas, TX 75218

RMM FP: A FLIGHT PLANNER FOR FLIGHT SIMULATORS: For the ultimate in flight simulator realism, this product allows computer pilots to design flight plans for simulated expeditions. In addition to maps and an index for several standard scenery databases, the product includes sample flight plans, tips on using flight simulators, an editor for changing scenery databases and utilities to calculate wind correction and descent rate. Primarily useful in conjunction with Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*, but relevant to other flight simulators with modifications. IBM (with 640K and hard disk). Circle Reader Service #15.

Stratagem Games
Australia

TERRAN ENVOY: This game is a great mindbender, akin to *MasterMind* in space with a lovely diplomatic twist. Plenty of trading, negotiation and (most importantly of all) figuring out who to trust out there in the big, bad galaxy. Fortunately, even with no sound support, the graphics and the player's handy spaceship computer are there to help assimilate the information required to succeed in rescuing humankind. IBM ($49.95) Circle Reader Service #16.

UBISoft
Greenbrae, CA

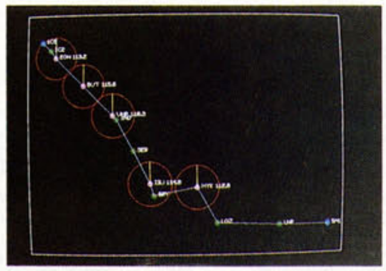
NIGHT HUNTER: Vampires are vulnerable in this imported action game where players join the ranks of the undead and explore the dark demesnes of damnation. The mechanics are as unforgiving as the treatment of monsters in old "B" movie plot lines, but players can change into bats and werewolves and bite the necks of their victims while attempting to avoid stake-wielding hunters and policemen armed with silver bullets. Amiga, Atari ST, IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #17.



Awesome



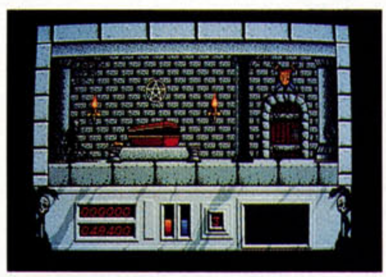
Nitro



RMM FP



Terran Envoy



Night Hunter



Deluxe Scrabble



Spirit of Excalibur



Super Off Road

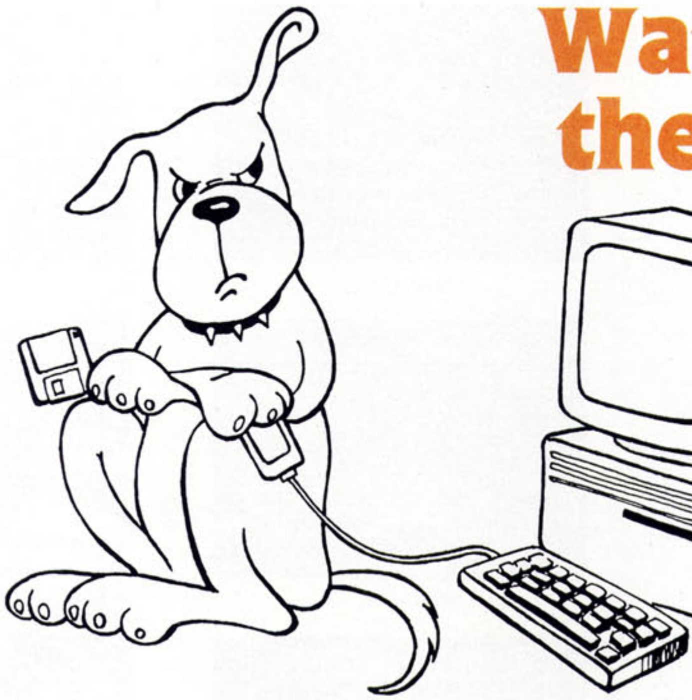
Virgin Mastertronic, Inc.
Irvine, CA

DELUXE SCRABBLE: Will this game spell success for the many countless enthusiasts of the classic board game? Perhaps, but not if one is a "purist," since the computer comes up with foreign, proper and esoteric words which might lead to bloodshed if used between human players. Still, the on-line dictionary, anagram and crossword features will be quite useful for those wishing to play solitaire and sharpen up their Scrabble skills. IBM (59.95). Circle Service #18.

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR: Rich with atmosphere and lush graphics, this interactive game is set in Arthurian England. The player enlists the aid of knights, monks, wizards and local peasants in a journey replete with battling dragons and rescuing distressed damsels. Combat simulation seems tame by comparison to some of the bloodier offerings available. Is this a good thing? You decide. IBM ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #19.

SUPER OFF ROAD: Action gamers who invest more quarters than a night's take of a Vegas slot machine in the coin-op version will be thrilled to know how faithful to the original this conversion is. Up to three players can gather round the keyboard or use joystick/keyboard combinations and generally tear up the track. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Watchdog of the Industry



by Dennis Owens

Far be it from this lowly watchdog of the industry ever to hustle shamelessly any piece of work by any of his higher-ups in an attempt to gain more prestige, a higher payrate, more of the topnotch cool computer games to review, or an office larger than the one under the basement, behind the janitor's closet, in one of those underground, sunken, lost archaeological digs which is so damp and dingy, it must have been built before the age of Frobozz. *But*, it just so happens that, after taking a break from poring religiously over the latest R.I.D. ratings (not to suggest that reviewers would ever stoop to comparing who gets to review more of the really neat games (who? *Us?*)) — *but*, it just so happens that after *happening* to have taken a break from *happening* to have been reviewing the latest ratings and *happening* to have noticed that Scorpia gets to write about more of the top 20 — no, make that top 30 — no, 40 — well, anyway, that more of the games Scorpia has been fortuitous enough to have played and reviewed for the aforementioned higher-ups have placed, well, higher up than those slaved through and copiously described by said lowly watchdog, that he figured (he being Lowly Watchdog), it might not hurt to butter up the ol' assigner of reviews himself, the widely praised, honorary so-and-so etc. etc. by *Lord British* himself, our own loved and *extremely* well-revered Johnny Wilson. *[Ed: Well, we tell our writers to be objective.]*

So, *The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook*, for those unfortunate enough not to know, is chock-full of hints, suggestions, discussions, illustrations, wit, tenacity, well-placed uses of underlining, wisdom, verbosity, little dots to offset important points and machine-specific information. *[Ed: Delete reference to verbosity during typesetting.]* A stroke of genius, long overdue *[Ed: Hey, it was only a month late!]*, *The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook* is filled with the pathos of the human condition, the crime map of Jofeberg, and sad and depressing commentaries about paleontologists' concerns about development in the Temecula area.

Your lowly watchdog laughed. He cried! He jumped up and howled at the moon. He bayed. He snuffled around in the dirt. *The SimCity Planning Commission Handbook* is obviously prize-winning material. Nobel Prize. Pulitzer Prize. Someone make that wonderful writer a knight!

Oops! Too late.

Actually, the book *is* pretty good. It discusses the game inside and out — including options and the reasons behind them for dealing with the various disaster scenarios, in-depth and useful discussions about how to reduce pollution, and even how to raise the funds to build a space port. (What? Oh. Well, could have *sworn* that part was in there.)

Plus, niftiest of all — oh, did your lowly watchdog say "of all?" What he *meant* was "another of the really nifty features" (because we all know that the *niftiest* of all is the writing itself (the writing, of course, of our own dear and beloved Dr. Johnny L.)). Anyway, what's really nifty is the inclusion in the back of the book of a card which can be sent to Maxis to get lots of the cities mentioned and illustrated in the book (Squaresville, Finigan City (your lowly watchdog's personal favorite because he simply *loves* bridges), and Gilligan City, to name but a few).

Your lowly watchdog's only problem with the book is that he has learned to embezzle so well (*Bond issues! Bond issues!*) that he wishes there would have been more discussion of the various pastimes available to ex-mayors whiling away their time in Sing Sing.

Dennis Owens is a social worker in Texas who has written for CGW *over the course of several years. He attracted our attention with a series of humorous letters to the editor and will continue to write an irregular humor column (in addition to the increased amount of blue chip reviews which the editor will now surely assign him) for* CGW. **CGW**

On-Line Gaming

(Continued from page 53)

whenever any human player has entered or exited the game. With so much emphasis on community building within the *Gemstone III* area on **GEnie**, it is no wonder that Brian Moriarty, designer of **Lucasfilm**'s *Loom*, describes the game as a microcosm of society.

Even Valuable Gems Have Flaws

Alas, as brilliantly conceived and wonderfully executed as much of *Gemstone III* is, the text parser provides the most visible flaw. Much like an earlier text game, one can read a vivid description of a room complete to description of a tavern keeper. Yet, when one tries to speak to the tavern keeper, the ubiquitous mantra of the parser is chanted, "I don't understand what you just typed." To be sure, it isn't quite as obnoxious as "I don't know what a tavern keeper is," but it reflects the traditional bane of the parser nonetheless.

Further, as well-written as the prose descriptions are, one must play "Guess The Parser" in order to find anything active in the locations (either that or most of the shops in Kelfour's Landing don't have any active items and that seems strange for an introductory location). This means players end up spending lots of time trying to guess what's important in the game and guessing the active items is *not* playing the game. Meanwhile the meter continues to tick.

Finally, on-line games need to find some better way to indoctrinate players into the game. Most games have documentation which can be downloaded, but once again, the meter is running. If only there was some kind of free, introductory tutorial (i.e. with no meter running) that allowed the player to create a character and play through a few encounters before being dumped out into the interactive environment. That would take some of the fear out of novice players with regard to: a) not knowing command structures; b) not understanding conventions within the gaming group; and c) not knowing what to do.

Assessment

This writer wanted to delve into *Gemstone III* with both feet. All the "word of mouth" he had received about the game was positive and the character generation sequence had him itching for exciting quests and dynamic deeds. Instead, the development of the character seemed wasted, the gaming environment appeared surprisingly empty and it was an ego risk to try to get acquainted with the other player characters in the game. This writer *knows* that on-line games will be an important contributor to the creation of a global village of understanding, culture and play in the future. Yet, the present incarnation of on-line games doesn't quite work for him.

Gemstone III may be accessed by typing "m930" from any prompt on **GEnie**. It has some flaws, but it also sparkles. Also, the game, like all good online games, is continually being updated and improved, so these notes must be considered tentative and never final. Gamers will have to decide for themselves whether the sparkling facets or flaws are dominant. **CGW**

Reach Out and Crush Someone



The State of the Industry: About three years ago, *CGW* had a special opportunity to attend the Artists' Symposium sponsored by **Electronic Arts**. One of the most fascinating conferences at the symposium dealt with modem games and their potential for the future. Dan Bunten shared his experiences in attempting to get *Modem Wars* to market and work with **EA** in developing a "front-end" for modem support.

The issue, as Bunten saw it, was that computers were in the "wrong room of the house" for multi-player games using a single computer to be effective. Originally, multi-player games simply required players to take turns in front of the keyboard and monitor (some, like **Koei**'s *Nobunaga's Ambition II* and **Data East**'s *Full Metal Planet* still require this effort) or the ability to save the game to disk and pass the current position on to the next player (as in both the American Civil War series of wargames from **SSI** and **SSG** or **Interstel**'s *Empire*. Then, Bunten tried to remove the logjam in front of the monitor by using a deck of cards which impacted on the strategy of the game (*Robot Rascals*). Andrew Greenberg used a similar technique in the *Star Saga* series when he supplemented the time in front of the monitor with off-line "textlets" (paragraphs which described in brilliantly conceived prose the kinds of atmosphere and plot development computer gamers were used to seeing on the screen).

Unfortunately, neither of the last two strategies seemed to catch on. Bunten theorized that the modem was the ideal medium for involving more than one player in a computer game. Hence, *Modem Wars* was born. Alongside *Modem Wars*, EA demonstrated its commitment to modem gaming with the modem-to-modem options in *688 Attack Sub*, *F-16 Combat Pilot* and *Populous*. **Spectrum HoloByte** has also made a commitment to modem-to-modem games with *Falcon A.T.*, *Tank!*, *Flight of the Intruder* and *Stunt Driver*, as well as the planned *Electronic Battlefield Series*.

Whether the trend toward "modemable" games will continue or not is unclear. It has been very difficult for software publishers to monitor whether the "modem" option has actually added to sales or not. *CGW* urges those readers which use the modem options to specify that they like the option on their registration cards whenever they purchase a "modemable" product.

State of the Magazine: This issue, *CGW* highlights multi-player games by offering: reviews of **Microprose**'s *Knights of the Sky*) and **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Stunt Driver* (which offer modem play); design notes and a replay for *Command HQ*; a review of **NEC**'s *TV Sports: Football* (the **Turbo-Grafx 16** version which uses a peripheral to allow up to five players); a new "Opponents Wanted" column (expected to run irregularly); and some notes on selected bulletin board (BBS) and network games. Computer gaming no longer means solitary confinement. Now, more than ever, computer gamers can hook up to Ma Bell and say, "It's clobberin' time!" **CGW**

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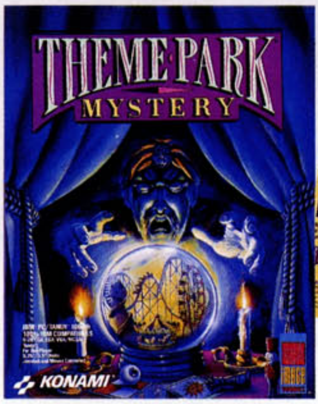
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